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

Based in Nairobi, Kenya, TARA is committed to recording the rich rock art heritage of the entire African continent, to making this information widely available and accessible and, to the extent possible, safeguarding those sites most 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 19 African countries and digitised over 20,000 images, many of which are available online. It is estimated that over one million people have visited TARA’s exhibitions. 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 heritage resource, and to improve the lives of people in those communities.

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

TARA Newsletter – December 2011

Cover:
Geometric engravings at Tchitundu Hulu, Angola

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TARA is a member of the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations.
Letter from the Chairman

The year 2011 was an exciting one for surveys – one of them in a country where TARA had never worked before – where we found new art styles and traditions! In March, we recorded the Tchitundu Hulu site in Namibe Province, Angola, featured on the cover of this issue. In May, we ventured into the wilds of Karamoja in north-eastern Uganda, and July/August saw us in western Kenya, where we recorded hitherto undocumented engravings near Kisii. Also in August, some fascinating sites were recorded at Kondoa in central Tanzania, and a totally unknown Twa painting site was recorded south of the Serengeti National Park – one of the most important sites we have recorded in East Africa for years.

TARA’s ground-breaking community projects are closely linked with our survey programme, and facilitate survey access and new discoveries, as well as creating awareness and promoting responsible tourism. 2011 saw the completion of the Lokori, Kenya project while projects in Nyero, Uganda and Kondoa, Tanzania are still in progress.

TARA is thrilled that its ‘Dawn of Imagination’ exhibition will be on permanent display in the National Museum and House of Culture in Dar es Salaam. For those of you passing through Tanzania, it is a must-see. TARA’s successful children’s book, *I Love Rock Art*, has been translated into Swahili for the Tanzanian audience, and will go a long way in promoting the exhibition – and Africa’s fragile rock art heritage – among the youth.

The Digital Imagining Centre (DIC, formerly ‘Archives’) continues to grow from strength to strength. The digitisation of several thousand of our general images has enabled us to create a special Environmental Collection, an important complement to our Rock Art Collection.

TARA continues to enjoy fruitful partnerships within Africa and beyond, and our partnership agreement with UNESCO’s World Heritage Centre – renewed in 2011 – is among our most important partnerships.

We have enjoyed our first full year at the new TARA offices on Warai South Road, on the outskirts of Nairobi. The extra space and extra light, not to mention the serene environment, are conducive to creative work – especially in the DIC. We encourage all our readers to stay abreast of our activities through our website, which will soon undergo some major changes to better serve as an important gallery of our African rock art images.

Lastly, I would like to extend TARA’s huge appreciation to our major donors in 2011, and to the many partners and supporters who make it possible for us to fulfil our mission.

Sincerely,

David Coulson
Executive Chairman
Updates

By Terry Little

Our colleague, Reuben Chelimo, who oversaw the transformation of the Archives to the Digital Imaging Centre (DIC) during his six years of service, left TARA in February. Evan Maina takes over as the new Head of the Department. In July, Evan was one of 19 heritage professionals from 15 countries selected to participate in ICCROM’s SOIMA programme (Sound and Image Collections Conservation) which took place in Latvia and Lithuania.

TARA is privileged to have benefitted from the US Embassy’s Community College Initiative. In June, staff member Martin Sande returned from a one-year programme in tourism management at Highline Community College in Washington, USA. In August, Moses Otieno left for Pierce College in Washington state for a one-year programme in media studies, as part of the same initiative.

Gloria Borona participated in a three-week rock art tourist guiding course at the Clanwilliam Living Landscape Project in South Africa. The course was jointly organised by the Getty Conservation Institute and SARAP.

Terry Little received a Getty International Fellowship to attend the annual conference of the American Association of Museums (AAM) in Houston, Texas in May where he presented a paper at a session entitled “Museums Linking Peoples: Perspectives from Brazil, Kenya and Turkey”. In October, he received a similar Getty fellowship to attend the conference of INTO, the International National Trust Organisation, in Victoria, Canada. The conference theme was "Connecting People, Places and Stories: New Strategies for Conservation in a Changing World". TARA joined INTO as a member in 2011, and the next international conference will take place in Uganda in 2013.

The French Ambassador to Kenya, His Excellency Etienne de Poncins, visited TARA on 28 June, 2011. Accompanying the Ambassador were Stephanie Seydoux, the Deputy Head of Mission, and Georges Diener, the outgoing Counsellor for Cooperation and Cultural Affairs. The Embassy of France in Kenya has long been a strong supporter of TARA and its projects. TARA is grateful for their continued interest.

TARA hosted eight interns in 2011 with Bachelor or Masters degrees in computer science, environmental studies, public history, community development, sociology and archaeology. For the first time, TARA also hosted two recent high school graduates. Most of the interns worked in the Digital Imaging Centre or with community projects and outreach programmes. The 2-4 month experiences benefit TARA by bringing in fresh ideas and experiences, while the interns often become some of our best supporters after their departures.
The Dawn of Imagination

By Gloria K. Borona and William Omoro

TARA’s exhibition ‘The Dawn of Imagination’ opened in December 2011 as a permanent exhibition in the newly refurbished galleries of the National Museum and House of Culture in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The exhibition, redesigned for a Tanzanian audience with text panels in Swahili, was set up by a team from TARA and the National Museum. Publicity materials (flyers, posters and banners) have also been developed to support the exhibition. TARA and the House of Culture are honoured to present this multi-faceted exhibition to the Museum’s visiting public. This will be the first permanent rock art exhibition in this region and will serve as an important communication tool on Tanzania’s rock art heritage and the continent as a whole. An education and outreach programme for schools will be developed around the exhibition to engage the young public, who will carry the conservation message into the future.

“The rock art of Africa makes up one of the oldest and most extensive records on earth of human thought. It shows the very emergence of the human imagination… Africa’s rock art heritage is the common heritage of all Africans and all people. It is a cultural gift from our ancestors that can bring diverse people together – with pride and a common commitment to share it and preserve it.”

– Kofi Annan, Former UN Secretary-General, in a 2005 endorsement of TARA’s work

The recently expanded National Museum and House of Culture, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

TARA’s Dawn of Imagination exhibition installed at the National Museum, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
By mid 2011, over 20,000 images were digitised in high resolution, and several thousand of these are available on the Internet (Aluka/JSTOR and TARA websites). The DIC has uploaded 1,000 rock art images to TARA's own online 'Image Gallery,' from sites in 19 African countries.

The shift from film to digital photography has reduced the workload for slide scanning, digital cleaning and colour correction, and we are now able to concentrate on ensuring the safety of the digital copies.

The DIC is in the final stages of implementing a high-end, back-up system for its digital assets. This has involved setting up high-capacity hard drives for remotely backing up digital data in multiple copies. The DIC will also continue migrating its digital data to the most appropriate archival formats to promote their long-term preservation and accessibility.

The Digital Imaging Centre (DIC) continues to support TARA's mission to be a permanent visual archive and to protect Africa’s endangered rock art.

Reuben Chelimo, Manager of the DIC, bade TARA farewell in January 2011 to join Digital Divide Data, Kenya. During his time at TARA, he made important contributions to the development of the organisation, and in particular the DIC. He developed a Slide Digitisation White Paper, for instance, and a Preservation Policy, which guides the DIC’s operations. Evan Maina was subsequently promoted to Head of DIC.

The DIC welcomed several new staff in 2011, including Yvonne Oliwo who joins as a graphic designer, and Jedd Muga as TARA’s in-house IT Coordinator. The DIC was also privileged to receive Eliza Wilson-Powers, a professional archivist from New York, USA for a second visit to share her expertise on digitising and archiving.

With one of the most experienced digitisation teams in East Africa, TARA’s DIC continues digitising not only slides but also analogue video, site record forms, site notes, rock art related materials, line drawings and sketches. In 2010 the DIC also embarked on the digitisation of an important ‘Environmental Collection,’ which complements the rock art collection (see facing page).

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Free Open Access
TARA is committed to ensuring the widest possible free access to the images and information which it generates, produces and collects. TARA endeavours to provide access to past, present and future literature, documentation and images on African rock art; to ensure their preservation; to assist both researchers and the general public in discovery and use of the information.
German documentary film maker, Lea Hartlaub, conducted research at TARA for a feature-length documentary film on the appearance of the giraffe in past and present human activity. Lea used TARA’s database to gather information on early depictions of giraffe in rock art.

“The Environmental Collection, comprehensive and enthralling in its own right, also provides a greater context for the rock art collection and work at TARA. Rock art did not emerge from cultures that became silent or remained ever in stasis – the arts came from a time and place deeply connected to present traditions, heritage and culture. They bear a history, but have also been embraced by contemporary populations. This collection, spanning 30 years, provides both a geographic context and cultural framework for the appreciation and interpretation of the Rock Art Archive, and the greater mission of TARA.”

– Eliza Wilson-Powers

TARA has accumulated a large collection of environmental photographic slides, which were recorded alongside rock art imagery over past decades, and whose composition includes a variety of subjects.

The collection includes images of the present inhabitants of rock art areas as well as landscapes, wildlife, architecture, ceremonies and festivals. The collection adds ecological and ethnographic understanding to the paintings and engravings and forms an essential resource that complements our rock art image collection.

In August 2010, with assistance from Elizabeth Wilson-Powers, an experienced archivist from the Pace Gallery in New York, over 10,000 images from this collection were selected for digitisation. By the end of 2011, over 2,500 images were digitised in a process that entailed cataloguing, scanning (at 300 dpi), digital cleaning, colour correction, quality control, metadata generation, and entry into TARA’s database.

TARA welcomes professionals and the general public to use its digital archive.

“I visited TARA in Nairobi for some days and had the opportunity to work on their archive. It is a wonderful source of investigation on rock art in Africa. It contains a full iconic documentation on most relevant sites and gives the researcher the chance to work in a comparative perspective and assume a lot of information both on paintings and engravings and on the landscape context where sites are. Browsing is very easy and the equipment is just special. The staff are very helpful.”

– Prof. Barbara Turchetta, University of Tuscia-Viterbo, Italy
Several years ago, I was told by my friend Elkana Ong’esa, the renowned Kenyan sculptor from Kisii, that there were ancient rock engravings in Kisii and, in August 2011, we finally had the opportunity to visit some of these sites! Terry Little and I were invited to speak at “African Stones Talk”, a three-day International Stone-Sculpture Conference which took place in Kisii, Western Kenya, with participants from over a dozen countries. The event was made possible through support from UNESCO and Kenya’s Provincial and County Authorities. As initiator and organiser of the conference, Elkana incorporated three visits to rock engraving sites in the programme.

Participants at the “African Stones Talk” conference in Kisii in August 2011, Western Kenya

The first site we visited was at Sameta, and by the time we met with district officials and the local school headmaster, we were already surrounded by a large crowd. We followed Elkana up a steep path on the hillside, where there were many small soapstone rocks with grooves, curved lines and cupules (carved hollows) on them as well as circles. As we made our way up the slope, we came to more and more of these stones bearing ancient markings.

Right: Ancient cupules, carved into rock resembling a bao game
The most amazing of these was a large rock with masses of lines and grooves, as well as two big eyes and a face at one end of the rock – suddenly, we could see the entire rock as some form of mythical animal. We have never before recorded anything remotely like this.

At another site a few kilometres away, we were shown a boulder which had been pulled out of the hillside/bank and was apparently about to be sold. On it, once again, were lots of strange markings and hollows that had been polished long ago. We were told that there is a Ugandan company that comes and buys soapstone rocks from the locals for ridiculously low sums, apparently to use in a crushed/powder form in order to make paint. We asked how much this boulder would fetch and were told 5,000 Kenya Shillings (approx. US$ 60).

The next day, Elkana took us to see some old engravings at Tabaka, near Kisii town, where people are quarrying stone for their local soapstone industry. We recorded many extremely interesting, ancient engravings right at the edge of huge quarry holes and pits, which are clearly at great risk of being destroyed. Some of these were recorded, according to Elkana, in the 1960s by the late Professor Osaka Odak from the University of Nairobi. In my talk at the conference, I pointed out the irony that it is today’s sculptors and masons who, through lack of awareness of their ancient rock art heritage, are threatening what may be the origins of their own contemporary tradition.
In August, David Coulson and Alec Campbell visited Kondoa, a World Heritage site in central Tanzania. The main objective of the trip was to record a number of rock painting sites hitherto unrecorded by TARA as part of a project funded by the US Embassy in Dar es Salaam. The visit was just one of many survey trips that TARA has made to Kondoa over the past 20 years. Kondoa was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2006, and is the first rock art site to be listed in East Africa.

Near Kolo, Coulson and Campbell were joined by Sikujua Ramadhani, Simon Materu and Rauna Maulidi from the Antiquities Department and by Achilles Bufure from the Museum in Dar es Salaam. The group first recorded six new sites in the Pahi area, which they had not been able to visit on previous visits. One of the paintings they recorded was the “Pipe-player” (facing page bottom left) recorded by Mary Leakey in the 1950s. During this visit the group also visited sites at Kisese as well as several sites at Thawi overlooking the Bubu River Valley. One of the paintings they recorded at Thawi was of an exceptional and very unusual rhino with a long horn (right).
On their return journey from Kondoa, Coulson and Campbell made a 200-mile diversion to the west to look for a site in a vast hunting concession called Maswa, south of Serengeti National Park. A few years ago, Coulson received a report from a hunter about a rock-painting site he had come across in the Maswa Concession.

On the long drive to the camp, their vehicle was involved in an accident. Fortunately, they escaped unhurt. While they waited to be airlifted out of the reserve they were taken by the concession Manager, Julius Robinson, to the rock art site at a huge granite outcrop known to locals as Kijashu, about half a day’s journey from the camp. They noticed that on maps the site was simply marked as ‘Maasai Paintings’.

On arrival at the site it was immediately clear to Coulson and Campbell that the paintings were not the work of Maasai, but had been made by Twa hunter-gatherers more than 1,000 years ago. By contrast, Maasai paintings usually date to less than 100 years. TARA has surveyed many Twa painting sites in East Africa, but this site was definitely one of the most important they have recorded. At least 20 square metres of rock are covered in paintings, featuring hundreds of tall, stylised humans, concentric circles, giraffes and cattle. (see photos on page 10 and 11)
Aerial view of granite outcrop at Maswa containing huge Twa painted panel (see detail from panel opposite)

Twenty-two deeply ground holes, each about 40cm across, aligned due north-south and facing west, Maswa

Opposite: Part of the huge panel of Twa paintings in the Maswa granite outcrop pictured above, including elongated human figures, giraffes, concentric circles and geometrics. Note the 20cm bar scale
In May 2011, David Coulson and Gloria Borona travelled to Kampala to take part in a rock art survey organised by the National Museum of Uganda, as part of a rock art project funded by the US Embassy in Uganda. The group included Ugandan rock art researcher, Catherine Namono, as well as Jackie Nyirakiza and Dismas Ogwen from the Museum.

The first area/site visited was Lolui (also known as Dolwe) Island in Lake Victoria, near the Kenya border. David Coulson had already visited the island about 10 years ago when he and Alec Campbell recorded a number of interesting sites. On this recent visit, the group was taken to see several new sites, including Twa painting sites and some exceptional cupule sites. Cupules are depressions carved into the rocks as if a giant had scooped them out with a huge spoon!

TARA believes that these depressions may once have been used for the ritual preparation of food but many alternative interpretations have also been proposed. Cupules are found all over Africa as well as in other parts of the world. Lolui is also known for its rock gongs, rocks which have natural resonance and which were once used for divining and communication purposes.
From Lolui the group returned to the mainland and drove northeast, past Mount Elgon, stopping at several Twa painting sites on the way. Continuing even further north, they entered the Karamoja area of northeastern Uganda, north of Mount Moroti. Here, Catherine Namono took them on a trek for several hours through the heat and dense bush, to see a painting site unlike any other site in the region. (Bottom and left centre)

The expedition ended at Nyero, the rock art site west of Mt Elgon, which was declared a National Monument in the 1960s. One of the paintings at this site was adopted by the Uganda Museum as their logo a few years ago. A large meeting was arranged next to the site with the community to discuss their involvement in the management and protection of the site.

Enigmatic Twa painting on a granite boulder

Recording a red geometric design at Obwin Rock shelter

Paintings of human figures holding bows, and cattle at a newly recorded Karamoja site

Twa red concentric circles superimposing a white design at Obwin Rock

The site at Karamoja with the paintings (above left) located under the flat rock above
ANGOLA
Tchitundu Hulu

By Terry Little

Tchitundu Hulu, an extremely remote archaeological site in the Namib province of Angola, was the location of a workshop organised in March 2011 by the African World Heritage Fund, UNESCO and the Angolan Ministry of Culture. The aims of the workshop were to: consider the nomination of the famous rock art site onto the UNESCO World Heritage List; review the site’s Outstanding Universal Values; and provide training for heritage professionals from Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau and São Tomé and Principe on the UNESCO nomination process and in the development of management plans.

The site is impressive from many perspectives. There is a unique combination of art from different periods and traditions – the earliest from hunter-gatherers and the more recent from farmers, according to South Africa’s RARI (Rock Art Research Institute) Director, Ben Smith. A large expanse of the mountain face is covered with geometric – mainly concentric circles – engravings and in the shelters one finds geometric and zoomorphic (birds and antelope) paintings in red, black and white. Research has been carried out at Tchitundu Hulu by Santos Junior (1930), Camarate France (1950), Carlos Everdosa (1980) and Manuel Gutierrez (2010).

Below: Geometric engravings at Tchitundu Hulu, Angola. Note the rock exfoliation
The granite hillside where the most impressive engravings are found is said to be sacred for the Kwisi people (a Batwa group distinctive from the San groups of southern Africa). According to oral tradition, Tchitundu Hulu means ‘end of path’ or ‘wall of souls’. The beauty of the area and the impressive rains which fell during the workshop make it easy to imagine that the mountain was an important spiritual site for the peoples who created the art. Another curious aspect of the landscape is the plant *Welwitschia mirabilis*, a botanical species considered a living fossil and found only in the Namib Desert.

The site has been spared the damage of vandalism which plagues so many important sites these days, but these engravings are at some risk of natural flaking, which will be exacerbated by uncontrolled visitors walking on the mountain side.

The workshop resulted in agreement that Tchutundu Hulu be nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List, and that a number of management steps be undertaken (eg. systematic recording of the sites, collection of documentation, definition of boundaries, survey, mapping, definition of the legal status, conservation assessment). Now that the war in Angola is over, the country is interested in opening up this and other heritage sites to visitors. Infrastructure and visa restrictions do not facilitate this at the moment, but with the enthusiastic support of Angolan Ministry of Culture this could change in the near future.
The goal of TARA’s community projects is to promote responsible rock art tourism, which in turn serves to improve the livelihoods of nearby communities as well as opening the way to other survey opportunities. This is achieved by embracing a wider scope of development (social, economic, environmental and cultural), guided by the principles of management by objectives, real community involvement, capacity building and empowerment, equity and impact assessments. TARA believes that target communities more often than not have a clear idea of their needs and how these should be addressed – ideas that are taken into account as TARA develops concepts and implements projects. In 2011 TARA launched its sixth community rock art project in Chongoni, Malawi (UNESCO World Heritage Site).

“It is time for Africa’s leaders to take a new and more active role. We must save this cultural heritage before it is too late. Two initiatives are especially critical: educating our children and engaging local communities.”
– Former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan (2005)

KONDOA, TANZANIA

In February 2011, TARA organised a three-day Engagers’ Workshop, which was attended by 30 participants from Kolo, Mnenia and Pahi villages. This was an opportunity to launch the project and involve the participants in discussions about the importance of the heritage and how they can be involved in its management and conservation. At the end of the workshop, the participants were equipped with tools that would enable them to pass on the conservation message to the rest of the community members. In addition, five participants were selected for an exchange programme to TARA’s flagship community rock art project, the Abasuba Community Peace Museum, on Kenya’s Mfangano Island (Lake Victoria).

In August 2011, David Coulson and Alec Campbell – joined by staff of Tanzania’s Division of Antiquities – surveyed and documented the little known sites at Pahi, Kisese and Thawi on the upper slopes of the Bubu River Valley. The mission aimed at locating and documenting sites that were recorded by Dr. Mary Leakey in her publication *Africa’s Vanishing Art* in the 1950s. The team documented the conservation challenges at the respective sites, and to this end TARA continues to work with the Tanzanian Department of Antiquities and other stakeholders to ensure that the integrity of the sites is maintained. Other project activities, such as signage, camping facilities, a guidebook and research, are in progress.
NYERO, UGANDA

TARA and the Uganda Museums held a three-day Community Engagers’ Workshop from 24 to 26 January 2011, the first activity in a year-long community conservation project. The workshop aimed at enhancing understanding of rock art heritage, introducing the concept of rock art tourism and community benefits and effective community engagement in conservation efforts. The workshop was officially opened by His Highness the Emorimor (King of the Iteso) and attended by 30 participants drawn from Karamoja, Katakwi, Lolwe, Mukongoro, Nyero and Soroti. This was followed by an exchange programme in which five community members were selected to visit other TARA community rock art projects in Kenya (Kakapel Community Cultural Centre in western Kenya, and the Abasuba Community Peace Museum on Mfangano Island).

In May, TARA and the Uganda Museum undertook a survey and documentation mission in eastern Uganda, including sites on Looli Island and a new site in Karamoja. The team was joined by Dr. Janette Deacon and Dr. Catherine Namono, who are involved in the preparation of the nomination dossier for Nyero rock paintings and other Twa art in Eastern Uganda, to have them listed as a serial UNESCO World Heritage Site. Other project activities that were implemented include the development and installation of signage, and a conservation and management plan.

KAKAPEL, WESTERN KENYA

In 2011, TARA and the Kakapel Stakeholders’ Committee invested in basic camping facilities at the Kakapel Community Cultural Centre. This has not only made the Centre a comfortable place for visitors, but also contributes to income generation and the self-sustainability of the project. In order to strengthen the management of the Centre, TARA supported the Site Manager, Anthony Odera, to undertake a Diploma in Project Management at Moi University, Kenya. The Centre has benefitted from the installation of a fence and gate through the ‘Green Park’ project, a joint initiative of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA).

The programme further oversaw the planting of over 100 indigenous trees at the Centre. TARA complimented these efforts by painting and landscaping the gate with vines. In June 2011, the Kakapel Site Manager identified a new site at Kakoli village with red and white paintings which formally had been recorded by TARAs team that visited Kakapel in September. During the site visit, TARA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Kakapel Stakeholders’ Committee, which will guide the partners in conserving Iteso cultural heritage.

In November 2011, TARA joined the Iteso King, the Kakapel Stakeholders’ Committee, and other invited guests during a colourful ceremony to officially open the Iteso homestead at the Bomas of Kenya. The Stakeholders’ Committee, invited guests and community members joined efforts to raise funds to support the Centre’s programmes. TARA joined the Iteso community for this event as well as for the Cultural Festival on 26 December 2011.
LAKE VICTORIA, WESTERN KENYA
Abasuba Community Peace Museum (ACPM)

The ACPM has continued to work with school groups through funding from EPA (École du Patrimoine Africain – School for African Heritage) for an education and outreach programme, designed to spur interest in heritage among the youth.

Selected school groups visited the Abasuba Museum in 2011, and the Museum team also made outreach visits to schools. The project is in its final stage and will be awarding the best school and pupils in the different competition categories in a final ceremony.

Meanwhile, the Museum Curator, Jack Obonyo has been part of a CHDA (Centre for Heritage Development in Africa) exchange programme which has enhanced his skills and knowledge and professional networks.

The founding board members stepped down in 2011 to pave way for the appointment of a new board, with members from diverse backgrounds. Other milestones for the ACPM in 2011 include the introduction of a quarterly e-Bulletin, documenting its activities and other news as well the establishment of a craft centre to generate income and promote environmental conservation which received assistance from Abasuba Museum and ACPM friends in the USA.

CHONGONI, MALAWI

In November 2011, TARA and the Malawian Department of Antiquities launched a one-year community project in Chongoni, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with support from the US Ambassadors’ Fund for Cultural Preservation. The project involves the local communities in the site’s conservation and promotes responsible tourism.

At a series of community meetings on 15 and 16 November, participants from the Chentcherere and Mphunzi sites demonstrated a keen interest in their heritage and in how to welcome and take care of visitors. TARA is excited to launch its 6th community rock art conservation project and is committed to working with the Malawi Government to deliver a project of which all stakeholders can be proud. On the mission were TARA’s Terry Little and Gloria K. Borona. They were joined by Potipher Kaliba, Medson Makuru, Chrissie Chiiumia and John Chilachila from the Department of Antiquities.

LOKORI, RIFT VALLEY NORTHERN KENYA

One of the major outputs of the Lokori project is a 15-minute documentary “The Mystery of Namoratunga” that chronicles the rock art, nature and other attractions in the region against the backdrop of Turkana culture. In the past year, signage has been installed at the two main sites, Namoratunga North and South, and at other strategic locations. The signs are designed to create awareness among the local people and visitors to the region and provide information about the culture, natural heritage and rock art sites. TARA has partnered with two Community Based Organisations (CBOs) – Lokubae Water Users Association (LWUA) and Morulem Water Users Association (MWUA) – to set up basic camping facilities, a much-needed investment in this region. The greatest achievement of this project is increased awareness of cultural heritage at the local level. Prior to TARA’s intervention, the local people had never visited the site; but now they have, and they have embraced it as a resource for social and economic development.
Focus: Jean Clottes

By David Coulson

I first met Jean Clottes in 1994, just after the discovery of the now famous Chauvet Cave (Werner Herzog’s 2011 3D documentary Cave of Forgotten Dreams beautifully exposes the Chauvet experience), which played a huge role in his professional life. I remember driving to his house in the Pyrenees foothills and listening spellbound as he recounted the extraordinary story of the cave’s discovery. For the first and probably only time, rock art made it onto the cover of Time Magazine! Years later Jean took my wife, Deborah, and me – as well as Alec and Judy Campbell – to see Chauvet Cave in the Ardèche, which was certainly one of the highlights of my life. Thirty-five thousand year old European rhinos and cave lions seem to move across the walls in the flickering lights.

Alec Campbell and I were also lucky to share a major African rock art revelation with Jean in 1997, when we first recorded the Dabous Giraffes near the Air Mountains in Niger. These remarkable 6,000 year-old, life-size giraffe carvings are situated on the summit of a rocky outcrop in the middle of a remote wadi (dry riverbed). Before this trip, Jean had not seen any Saharan rock art. I remember that we stood in awe as we gazed for the first time (below) at the carvings and Jean exclaimed, “C’est une merveille, une des merveilles du monde!” (This is a marvel, one of the wonders of the world!).

After that memorable experience, we made other Saharan trips with Jean, accompanied by his remarkable wife Renée. He and Renée particularly enjoyed Niger and got on very well with the Tuareg people. Renée was a yoga teacher and I fondly remember watching the two of them doing their ‘Salutes to the Sun’ in the desert at sunrise. They both came out repeatedly to see our mutual friend, Sidi Mohamed Ilies, and were travelling with Sidi in 2010 when Renée was suddenly taken ill and died. Sidi obtained special permission from the Governor of Agadez region, Niger for Renée to be buried in Air Mountains, a part of the Sahara where she and Jean had shared so many special times.

In 2007 the French Embassy in Kenya sponsored Jean to investigate an intriguing rock painting deep in a volcanic cave on Mount Suswa (see below) near Nairobi. Both Jean and Kenyan archaeologist, George Abungu, were amazed by the size of this painting and at its similarity to Palaeolithic paintings in Europe. Samples analysed at the Louvre in Paris subsequently proved that the painting was modern. It had almost certainly been painted by a French artist for the film, La Guerre du Feu (Quest for Fire) in 1979! The story of the Suswa paintings has just been published in the latest issue of INORA, the International Newsletter on Rock Art.

For many years Jean has been a valuable member of TARA’s Advisory Committee, and we have been privileged to have him as a Keynote Speaker at our international conferences, ‘The Future of Africa’s Past’ and ‘Conservation of African Rock Art: Challenges of Theft and Vandalism’.

Former Chairman of ICOMOS’s International Committee of Rock Art and of the Société Préhistorique Ariège-Pyrénées, Jean has been honoured numerous times. In 2007, the Tuareg people made him an Honorary Tuareg with the name Almawekil, “Our Respected Representative”. In 2010 he was awarded the Great Gold Medal with Special Honours for Sciences from the Academic Society Arts-Sciences-Lettres, the first time a rock art specialist received this special recognition.

Prof. Jean Clottes is one of the world’s leading specialists in prehistoric art. A researcher and academic, Clottes is an expert for ICOMOS (International Committee on Monuments and Sites) and President of IFRAO (International Federation of Rock Art Organisations). He is author or co-author of numerous works about Palaeolithic art including Chauvet Cave: The Art of Earliest Times (2001), World Rock Art (2002), and Cave Art (2008).
TARA is pleased to announce the release of its new publication *Ninapenda Michoro ya Miambani*, an 18-page full colour booklet. This publication is the Swahili language version of TARA’s popular children’s book *I Love Rock Art*, published in 2010. Incorporating cartoons, crosswords, puzzles and games, the publication enhances learning about rock art heritage in an interactive manner. The booklet will be used for an education and outreach programme in schools in conjunction with TARA’s exhibition ‘The Dawn of Imagination’, which opened in 2011 at the Tanzanian National Museum and House of Culture in Dar es Salaam. The production of this publication was made possible through support from the Embassy of the Republic of Germany in Tanzania.

TARA is working on four new guidebooks for its community projects in Suba (Kenya), Nyero (Uganda), Kondoa (Tanzania), and Chongoni (Malawi). These booklets are not only informative, but are designed to showcase the beauty of the rock art and other heritage in each of the four countries.
Partners

We are extremely grateful to the foundations, embassies, governments and other bodies around the world whose contributions in cash and kind – as well as their moral support – made it possible for TARA to achieve its mission in 2011.

We are especially thankful for the support of the Arcadia Fund, which funds many aspects of our programmes and operations; and to the Robert H. and Ann Lurie Foundation which continued to contribute generously to TARA. The Headley Trust (UK) also granted support towards TARA’s core costs.

TARA has continued to enjoy support from the United States, through the Ambassadors’ Fund for Cultural Preservation, which has given tremendous support to community rock art projects in Tanzania, Uganda and now Malawi. Meanwhile, the Dutch Embassy in Tanzania funded the installation and promotion of “The Dawn of Imagination” exhibition at the National Museum and House of Culture in Dar es Salaam, which opened in December 2011. The German Embassy in Tanzania funded the publication of Ninapenda Michoro Ya Miambani (‘I Love Rock Art’ in Swahili) which accompanies the exhibition.

TARA recognises with gratitude the partnerships it enjoys with the national and local heritage bodies in Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Somaliland, Tanzania and Uganda, with whom it has worked in 2011. TARA particularly recognises the support of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, with whom TARA recently renewed its partnership agreement.

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The Dawn of Imagination
African Rock Art

“The rock art of Africa makes up one of the oldest and most extensive records on earth of human thought. It shows the very emergence of the human imagination. It is a priceless treasure.”
Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General (2005)

Now showing at National Museum and House of Culture, Dar es Salaam

Funded by the Embassy of the Netherlands
Support from the National Museum and House of Culture, Dar es Salaam

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