FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Happily TARA has enjoyed another groundbreaking year. The receipt of a letter from President Nelson Mandela endorsing the importance of our work was a high point. A second high point was the recruitment of Amolo Ng’weno, our new Chief Operations Officer. Yet a third was the news in August that following many months of discussions with the National Museums, Kenya’s premier rock art site, Kakapel has been gazetted as a Monument. Meanwhile TARA’s digital archive project is now up and running.

Another major event planned for this year was a fund-raising dinner at the United Nations, New York due to take place October 20th. The dinner was to be hosted by TARA and Secretary-General Kofi Annan had agreed to attend as keynote speaker. The Secretary-General was however forced to change his schedule at the eleventh hour and we therefore decided to postpone the dinner until fall 2005.

Meanwhile TARA’s rock art survey trips continue to provide exciting new materials for our archive. I revisited Niger at the end of January together with Drs. Annette Lanjouw where we were able to record more new sites. Then in April we travelled to southern Mauritania, the first time that TARA has worked in Mauritania, and we succeeded in surveying a number of hitherto unknown sites. Later in August I visited several unrecorded sites in the north of Kenya including paintings, rock gongs and cupules.

Despite the continued support of our donors we shall still need additional funding for each of our different projects during 2005/6. I am excited about the prospects for 2005/6 when we shall be implementing the conclusions of the TARA conference where applicable, developing and putting into action a conservation and tourism plan for Kakapel and continuing to expand the digital archive as well as continuing with our survey work. In February 2005 we are planning, together with a UK laser-scanning team to digitally record in 3D the famous “Fighting Cats” in southern Libya as well as other ancient endangered art-works.

David Coulson, Chairman TARA.

ABOUT TARA

The goals of TARA are to create a permanent visual archive of Africa’s rock art before it is too late, share this priceless archive with the world community, and, to the extent possible, preserve today’s most threatened rock art sites. TARA believes an important way to realize the value of rock art in Africa is to promote awareness of its richness, antiquity and importance.

TARA, the only Africa-based organisation dedicated to promoting the well-being of all Africa’s rock art, TARA’s work has been endorsed by Nelson Mandela, who encourages national governments and local communities throughout Africa to contribute their time and resources to the challenge of preserving and protecting Africa’s rock art.

TARA has also received support and recognition from the Ford Foundation, the Andrew Mellon Foundation, and the National Geographic Society; amongst others, TARA’s singular contributions have also been widely acclaimed in the scientific and popular media.

TARA’s chairman, international photographer David Coulson, has made his life’s work to photograph and document rock art in over 50 different African countries. Over 20,000 of his photographs are currently being digitized by TARA for inclusion in the Mellon Foundation’s online archive Artstor.
WHITE LADY UNBARRIED

Fantastic news has reached us: the White Lady has been unbanned. To be more precise, the bars, which for nearly 50 years have ‘protected’ the rock paintings in the Maack Shelter in the Brandberg but have also destroyed the art’s integrity, have now been removed officially on instructions from the National Monuments Commission, Namibia. We congratulate the Commission on a difficult decision and the 25 or so people who attended a site meeting here in October, 2003 who made the original recommendation. Only some simple railings remain to discourage visitors from touching the paintings.

Reinhard Maack, a German schoolteacher who visited the mountain during World War I, first reported the paintings and gave his name to the shelter. The Abbé Breuil, doyen of prehistoric rock art between the 1930’s and 1950’s, also visited the shelter in the 40’s, noted the slender human figures painted mainly in white and with long tresses, and described them as representing ‘foreigners’ from the Mediterranean—Phoenicians, Croats or such like. He mistook a male with white legs (see tracing left) for a female figure and so the name ‘White Lady of the Brandberg’ came into being. The paintings, similar to many in the region, represent ancestral Bushmen as well as the idea amongst rock art specialists, of propagating the theory that the art was the work of foreigners from outside, rather than Bushman ancestors.

The removal of the bars is a major step in the conservation of Namibia’s rock art. At one stride, the Commission has freed the art so that the public can enjoy it to the fullest, and has expressed its confidence in the Dureb Mountain Guides, a local community organization that manages the sites and its estimated 30,000 annual visitors. These visitors will now view the site from a greater (safier) distance from behind a simple guard rail and not through bars.

AFRICAN ROCK ART IN USE!!

Elephant Trust was looking for a corporate logo for their several manifestations—the Amboseli Elephant Trust, the African Elephant Conservation Trust and the Amboseli Elephant Research Project—under the leadership of Cynthia Moss. After two years of searching, they finally settled for one of the spectacular rock art images from TARA’s collection! African artists had carved out this frieze of elephants on a 30 square metres sandstone rockface maybe 10,000 years ago in the south eastern corner of Algeria, deep within the Sahara desert near the Libyan & Niger frontiers.
Above: Capsules (cup-shaped depressions ground into the rock) on one of several rocks at a site on Lewa Downs Conservancy, north Kenya. This may once have been an important ceremonial site. Below: Lines of capsules on a Leikipia ranch (Ol Jogi).
NORTHERN KENYA

In August David Coulson travelled to an area 70 km north of Lewa Downs Conservancy, north of Mt. Kenya. New sites had recently been found here by Ian Craig of Lewa Downs who took David to see them. David was accompanied by Nigel Winser of the Royal Geographical Society, London (see photo inside cover), who is a member of TARA’s Advisory Board.

A rock gong just visible in the photo above (right end of outcrop) was featured in TARA’s last newsletter. On this recent visit Ian showed David and Nigel a newly discovered gong (pictured left) as well as some paintings. The site has long been known for its ancient wells (Kisima Hamsini) from which cattle are watered in times of drought.

Following this visit, Ian Craig also directed David to a newly discovered ‘cupule’ site a few kilometres north of the Lewa headquarters – five rocks with cupules. On one of these David counted 75 cupules (picture at top facing page). Cupule sites are found throughout Africa.
MAURITANIA

In April 2004, David Coulson, Alec Campbell – of TARA, Prof. Jeremy Keenan – of the Sahara Studies Group, University of East Anglia and Sam Challis – a young Oxford archaeologist set out from Nouakchott, capital of Mauritania to visit some recently reported and apparently unknown-to-science, rock paintings in the western Sahara Desert. They had been alerted to the existence of this rock art site by Steve Oliver-Taylor, a London based explorer. The expedition was funded by the National Geographic Society, Washington D.C. and by the British Academy in London.

The first part of the trip was spent in ‘Tagant’ district in central, southern Mauritania where Steve Oliver-Taylor had reported the new site. The expedition found the 11km long ridge which Oliver-Taylor had described with many stonewall ruins and a number of painting sites. The most interesting of these was a huge cave overlooking the desert with an upper level where they recorded large numbers of mounted horses (see cover photo). They also recorded many interesting pastoral paintings (see photo above), a big ‘handprint’ site and several images of an animal resembling a dinosaur (see photo right).

In the second part of the trip they recorded new sites in the ‘Ajaun’ district some 200 miles to the south east. These included abstract engravings, some geometric paintings and a major horse painting site where warriors are depicted mounted on horseback in a more naïve style (see Institutional Links box).
**NIGER**

David Coulson and Drs. Annette Ljunjouw (Consultant to TARA) travelled to Niger in January 2004. Their principal aims on this trip were to evaluate the status of the Dabous conservation project and identify key priorities for TARA in 2004/2005.

While there they also took the opportunity to survey several new sites. The latter included 3 new engraving sites in the immediate vicinity of Dabous, a rock-arch site (photo top) with engravings about 100 kilometres north west of Dabous, and another large site further east recorded by Henri Lhote in the early 1970s.

The art here consisted mainly of Libyan Warrior- style images with cattle and horses on one side of a riverbed. On the other side they photographed a remarkable engraving of a giraffe about 4 m (12 ft) tall with cow's horns on its head. When they visited the main site at Dabous they were told that some of the local elders had recently translated the ancient script (see photo left) next to the neck and head of the biggest giraffe as follows:

“...The day has become dry and the spirits having attained their ultimate height have now descended into the earth where they now stay. It is confirmed.”
HARNESSING GIRAFFE POWER

In every region of Africa, images of certain species tend to dominate the animal art. In South Africa's Drakensberg, eland outnumber other species, a fact that has led researchers to recognize the images as metaphors, and to access hidden aspects of the art. By studying the beliefs of modern Bush (San) peoples, researchers realized the artists, like their modern descendants, had employed 'eland power' to understand nature, and their ability to move through life and death, control rain and cure sickness.

Moving north, the dominance of eland gives way to that of other species such as kudu, elephant, giraffe and ostrich, but particularly to giraffe and ostrich. We can guess that these species also played important roles in the artists' lives. Both giraffe and ostrich are unique with their elongated necks, height, upright stature and the ability to survive without surface water; perhaps they were also metaphors across different cultures.

In southern Africa, giraffe are still recognized by some as 'rain animals'. A Botswana Bush (San) lady dreamed of giraffe. She heard heavy raindrops on the sand, like the thudding of their galloping hooves, and composed a song now often sung when !Kung Bushmen dance for rain.

An engraved giraffe in Namibia has a prominent emission from its muzzle, while that of another standing immediately behind it touches the former animal's mane, which exactly replicates the emission. We have seen other giraffes with the muzzle emission as far as north as Algeria, although Saharan giraffes tend to be associated with human figures. In Southern Africa, emissions from human noses have been interpreted as nose-bleeds occurring during trance states when shamans cure the sick. Thus a giraffe with nasal emission could reflect aspects of the trance state and curing, a metaphor for human ability to harness animal curative power?
In Niger, the Dabous giraffe engravings (photo of head, page 5) which TARA first recorded in 1997 have long strings or cords descending from their muzzles, terminating in tiny human figures. In Algeria's Tadrart Mountains a human figure holds a giraffe by its tongue or muzzle (see photo opposite page), and in the Oued Djerat (northern Tassili) two enormous engraved giraffe, each over eight meters long, have tiny humans riding high on their necks. On Libya's Messak Plateau we saw a huge human figure apparently copulating with a giraffe and in Egypt there is a similar painted scene of a man apparently leading a giraffe with a rope. Scenes like this have been cited by some European researchers as possible evidence of the early domestication of the giraffe in these areas.

In Zimbabwe's Matopo Hills, images of the giraffe tower above other animals and stride into strange geometric designs known sometimes as 'formlings', interpreted as metaphors for human potency. In Niger, Libya and around the southern shores of Kenya's Lake Turkana the great number of giraffe images, occurring singly, in pairs and in friezes of 15 or more animals, testify to the impon-

**Right above:** The white neck and head of a giraffe appears to rise through a curtain of red rain, Namibia, while three human figures approach. **Left Below:** Rain appears to pour from the neck of a giraffe in Namibia's Brandberg.

tance that giraffe held for their artists. We never see giraffe being hunted in the earlier art; it is only in more recent Saharan works that giraffe hunts occur and even these are rare.

In north-east Africa giraffes were captured as long ago as Roman times and a giraffe was shipped to China over 500 years ago, but these events occurred long after most of the art was made. So why were giraffes so important to so many artists in so many different cultures? Three images we ourselves have seen might provide initial clues to this enigma. The first two images are in the Brandberg, Namibia. One image shows the head and the white neck of a giraffe walking through a Brandberg, Namibia. One image shows the head and the white neck of a giraffe walking through a bunch of clouds that looks like a curtain of red rain. (See photo, top).

A second image further east shows two giraffes with what looks like rain streaming from their flanks (see photo below left). A third image in the Tassili shows a giraffe with a tiny red body and an incredibly long neck which disappears into what could be cloud apparently reappearing above the clouds. Could it be that some early peoples in different parts of Africa regarded the giraffe as a "rain animal", i.e. An animal thought to have power over the rains? Alec and David suspect that this might explain some depictions of humans apparently involved in interactions with giraffes, but Alec also believes that images of giraffe and ostrich may actually be metaphors or symbols for human beings.

TARA would like to initiate correspondence and welcomes others' thoughts on this subject.
KAKAPEL

One of Kenya’s most important rock art sites is the rock shelter at Kakapel (in western Kenya, south of Mt Elgon), where paintings from different styles and times are represented. The oldest of these may be as much as 4,000 years old and the most recent only a few hundred.

Unfortunately, the site has been recently vandalized and TARA has been working with the National Museums of Kenya to ensure its protection, restoration and conservation. We are pleased to announce that in July 2004 the site was gazetted as a Monument.

TARA, the National Museums and the Kenya Tourism Board are all working on a plan to develop the site for responsible tourism, including an interpretive center and service facilities. TARA will work with the local community to ensure that they are closely involved in management and are the chief beneficiaries of tourism development in the area, which will help to protect the site for future generations. TARA is currently seeking financing to develop and implement this plan for Kakapel as part of a wider initiative to promote rock art awareness and tourism in Kenya.

- PRESS COVERAGE:

As part of the preparation for the conference and exhibition in November 2004, we have been developing an extensive Press campaign. SWARA, the magazine of the East African Wildlife Society, carried a four-page spread in three of its four quarterly issues starting with July/August 2004.

In addition, the conference and exhibition have been covered in the Kenyan Press including Travel News, Msafiri (the Kenya Airways inflight magazine), Eye and local daily and weekly newspapers.

WEBSITE

The TARA website has been entirely revamped and is now located at “http://www.africanrockart.org”. New features include an expanded section about TARA, and the ability to take payments and donations online. It is still under development so please send us any suggestions.
DIGITAL ARCHIVE

TARA is working on a project to digitize at least 20,000 (of the 75,000 and rising!) slide photographs taken during TARA expeditions at dozens of sites in over 16 African countries. The slides are scanned at high resolution and these digital images, along with data about the sites, image content and geographical information, comprise the digital archive database. It will soon be possible for researchers to use this data to answer questions such as "How common are images of giraffes compared to other animals in African rock art?" and many others.

Earlier in 2004, we erected a small annex building to digitise and store the slides. The building, made from 2 containers, is climate-controlled and extra-clean. It now houses a staff of 3, along with a high-resolution scanner and large-format printer.

TARA's Digital Archive Project received support in 2003 from the Andrew Mellon Foundation, to cover the cost of digitizing about 20,000 of TARA's images as well as constructing an annex to house the slides and equipment. The images will be included in Mellon's ArtSTOR archive of world art. During 2004, we had visits from Stuart Saunders and Tom Nygren of the Mellon Foundation, who were able to have a look at the early work on the archive, and provide useful input into problem-solving as well as how to develop the database further.

In July 2004, Debra Issacs and Gordon Hull from the Rock Art Archive at UCLA visited TARA to set up the database for the digital archive and also to train us in image enhancement. We are coordinating with the Rock Art Research Institute at the University of the Witwatersrand, which is also part of the ArtSTOR project, to ensure that our data is comparable and compatible. A test data set is planned to go to ArtSTOR late in 2004. The full 20,000 images should be digitized and indexed and sent to ArtSTOR by the end of 2005, after which TARA will continue to expand and update its database and make it available to researchers.

Top series: Construction of the new archive begins earlier in 2004 and the finished building in September 2004. Above right: Work in progress at the archive. Above: In September 2004 TARA received a visit by Tom Nygren of the Andrew Mellon Foundation who have funded the Archive.
Implementation of the Strategic Plan drawn up in 2003 is well under way. TARA held board meetings in February and June 2004, and welcomed Victoria Waldock to the Board. Victoria is a documentary and commercial film producer with extensive marketing experience. She specializes in African subjects in a variety of genres including documentary television films. Victoria is best known for her work as Producer of Turner’s Emmy-nominated “Dying To Tell The Story” T.V. series, screened in over 20 countries worldwide. Born and raised in Kenya, Victoria has been actively involved in conservation and humanitarian initiatives in Africa throughout her career. She has been creating films for TARA since 1996.

TARA has also seen substantial growth in its operational capacity. Dr Rowena White joined TARA in November 2003 as Head of the digital archive project. She has a PhD from the University of Wales, Bangor, and worked in the Seychelles and Mauritius before joining TARA. Her photographs have been exhibited in Jersey’s collection of about 5000 wildlife and underwater images and earlier in her career she owned and ran a photography shop in Jersey.

In May 2004, TARA hired Amolo Ng’weno as its Chief Operations Officer. She joins TARA from the corporate world, where she was a co-founder of Africa Online and Biashara.biz. Before that she worked at the World Bank as an economist. She was educated at Harvard and Princeton and speaks French and Portuguese. We have also had support this year from a number of part-time and temporary staff and interns, some of whom we hope will remain part of the stronger, more dynamic TARA as we go forward.

TARA recognises the enormous contribution made by Prof David Lewis-Williams during his long service on our Advisory Board, and wishes him a happy retirement. For many years Lewis-Williams was an inspiration to rock art researchers and of the need to conserve this fragile heritage.

INSTITUTIONAL LINKS
Angourane (Niger)
British Institute in East Africa
IFRRO (International Federation of Rock Art Organizations)
INORA (International Newsletter on Rock Art)
National Geographic Society (Washington DC)
National Museums of Kenya
Rock Art Archive, UCLA, USA
Royal Geographic Society (London)
The Rock Art Research Institute of the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa
ALGERIA

An article about David Coulson and Alec Campbell’s November 2003 Algeria expedition will be published in the Geographical Magazine (RGS, London) towards the beginning of 2005. This will include the hitherto unpublished story (illustrated) of the remarkable new sites they recorded and of the photogrammetry project at the Big Giraffe site in the Oued Djerat first recorded by Henri Lhote in the 1950’s. Alec Campbell’s line drawing from one of the major new sites they recorded appears at left.

DRAWING LEFT: A hunter aims a double curved bow at a huge hippo while a small dog bounds between hippo and hunter. Behind, another hippo stands over a fallen man. The fallen man, engraved in a different style to the hippo, maybe a later addition. The hunting scene, carved into the riverbed and perhaps frequently flooded, maybe an invitation asking the spirits to grant good rains. The engravings may well be 7,000 years old.
HELPERS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DONORS 2004

TARA acknowledges with gratitude the continued support of the Ford Foundation, the Robert H and Ann Lurie Foundation, the Andrew Mellon Foundation and the National Geographic Society. We are grateful for support received from new institutional sponsors including Safaricom (Kenya) Limited, Giraffe Manor, Geographical Magazine (London) and the East African Wildlife Society. We should also like to thank the late Colonel John Millard who left TARA a legacy of £20,000 following his death in June this year as well as Nancy Reynolds, Katharine Pearson and the Ford Foundation Matching Grant programme.

SPECIAL THANKS

We would also particularly like to mention our gratitude to Mr. John Samuel of the Nelson Mandela Foundation and President Nelson Mandela for writing a special letter of endorsement for TARA’s work. In addition we are also grateful to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan and the Committee of Rock Art Nations led by Algerian Ambassador to the UN, HE Abdallah Baali and Australian Ambassador to the UN, HE John Dauth who were willing to lend their support to a fund-raising dinner TARA had planned in New York in October 2004 but which will now take place in 2005.

We would also like to offer special thanks to the entire staff of the National Museums of Kenya for their assistance with the mounting and preparation of the temporary rock art exhibition which opens at the Nairobi Museum November 1st 2004, and in particular to the director of the National Museums Dr. Ida Farah. Special thanks are also due to Dr. Mazendero Kibunjia and to the principal curator of the Museum, Simon Cathers.

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