The Messak plateau in southwestern Libya contains some of the world’s oldest and most magnificent rock engravings and carvings. Most of these date back to 12,000 years and maybe more. One of these early works is the so-called “Fighting Cats”, featured on the cover, which is particularly vulnerable to both environmental and human damage. Some of these rocks are already crumbling and in need of urgent conservation.

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TARA 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.

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TARA is registered in the United States as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation. TARA is a member of the International Federation of Rock Art Organizations.
Since our last Newsletter was published, TARA has once again reached new levels. Our travelling exhibition, commissioned by the Alliance Française, “Windows on Africa’s Past”, opened in Nairobi at the French Cultural Centre and will travel to around 12 African countries during the next 2 years. Meanwhile, we have an important exhibition on African Rock Art opening at the recently restructured Nairobi Museum (an EU project) in late 2007.

Our Archive Project with Aluka continues to expand with over 13,500 slides digitized and nearly 9,000 databased.

One of TARA’s new projects this year has been the redesigning and development of our website. Thanks to these changes we hope to be able to make the first selection of images from our archive available on the site in early 2008.

Apart from a short trip to the Sahara in February (Niger) our survey work in 2007 has focused mainly on Kenyan rock art where we have recorded a number of new sites, one

Strange mythical animal at Kinderdam, South Africa

In the meantime our community projects in western Kenya are going from strength to strength. In September we received a grant of Ksh. 14 million ($240,000) for our Suba community project on Mfangano Island, in Lake Victoria.

On the conservation side we recently heard some good news from the World Monuments Fund (WMF) in New York. In December 2006 TARA had applied to the WMF to have the now famous “Fighting Cats” site in Libya (Mathendous) listed on their 2008 Watchlist of the World’s 100 Most Endangered sites. We have now heard that not only has our application been successful, but the WMF has featured one of TARA’s images of the “Fighting Cats” on the cover of all the public relations material worldwide.

In May I was invited to participate in two UNESCO events. The first was a Partners’ Day Event (Partners of UNESCO) in Paris where I was one of the panelists, and the second was the 22nd International Symposium of Valcamonica on “Rock Art in the Framework of Cultural Heritage of Humankind”. During the conference I participated in a one day workshop entitled “Managing Rock Art World Heritage Sites” and delivered a paper on “Documenting Rock Art in Niger’s Air Mountains”.

More recently I flew to Tripoli in Libya for discussions with the Libyan Department of Antiquities on the future conservation and management of their fabulous rock art heritage.

I’ll finish with two important bits of news, one sad and one happy. The sad news is that TARA Board member David Kiyaga-Mulindwa died this year from a rare heart disease. The happier news is that in February we recruited a new Chief Operations Officer, Terry Little, who has already made his mark including a number of valuable contributions to TARA’s growing network of activities and initiatives.

David Coulson, Chairman TARA
TARA Executive Board member Victoria Waldock has recently received a scholarship for post-graduate studies at Oxford University in England. She will be reading for a D.Phil (PhD) in the Department of Archaeology, with a focus on Saharan Rock Art. Her research will take an anthropologically-oriented, interpretive approach to rock art analysis. Victoria, who was born in Kenya but has spent most of her adult life in the USA, explains: “as a filmmaker and media professional, my work has been driven by an interest in the power of image to transmit social and cultural knowledge. We at the present day can learn much from the ingenious manner in which highly complex concepts were conveyed through the rock art medium so many years ago”.

George Abungu, also an Executive Board member of TARA was awarded the “IFE Prize for Innovation in Museology” for his work in the promotion of African museums in July 2007 by The Pan-African Music Festival (FESPAM). FESPAM is a cultural exchange meeting that brings together professionals in music, science and the arts biannually in Brazzaville, Congo. It is organised by the government of the Republic of Congo, under the aegis of the African Union (AU), and in partnership with UNESCO, CICIBA, CIM and AFRICOM.

Dr Abungu was the director general of the National Museums of Kenya from 1999-2002 and is the founding director of Abungu Okello Heritage Consultants. He sits on the executive and advisory boards of numerous museum and heritage organisations in Africa, Europe and America (including ICOM and the World Monuments Fund). In July 2007, Dr Abungu, representing Kenya, was elected Vice Chairman of the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee.

Retirements - Kwaherini:
Judy Payne, personal assistant to the Executive Chairman, David Coulson, retired in February 2007 after six years. Zipporah Sangiliu, the organization’s Office Co-ordinator since 2002, retired in June. We wish them well and thank them for their dedicated service.

Appointments - Karibuni:
Terry Little was recruited in January this year as TARA’s Chief Operations Officer (COO), replacing Amolo Ng’weno who left TARA in 2006 to work in the USA. Terry comes to TARA with more than 20 years of professional service in the fields of cultural heritage and intercultural education, with a focus on training, communications, project planning and management. Formerly Manager of Communications and Information at ICCROM (Rome), he has extensive heritage experience in Africa through ICCROM’s PREMA programme. Most recently he was worked as an independent heritage advisor with the Centre for Heritage Development in Africa (CHDA, ex-PMDA), the Ecole du Patrimoine Africain (EPA), AFRICOM (International Council of African Museums) and the Robben Island Museum Education Department. Terry is also a part-time lecturer in marketing and communication of cultural heritage at the University of Cassino in Italy.

Ferial Nathoo was appointed the Executive Assistant to David Coulson in January 2007. Ray Amolo, began work in July 2007 as the Office Assistant. Gloria Kendi joined the organization in August as Projects Assistant.
Sidi Mohamed Illies is our principal partner in TARA’s Niger Community Project, as well as the founder and first President of Anigourane. Anigourane is a Niger-based association created for the protection and promotion of Saharan rock art. In May 2007, Sidi was invited by the University of California, Berkeley to visit the USA. The primary purpose of the visit was a cultural exchange, sponsored by Berkeley’s Archaeological Research Facility. Hosted by Professor Meg Conkey, Director of the Research Facility, and Laurence Beasley, Director of Art and Archaeological Tours, Sidi spent three weeks meeting with a variety of people, exchanging ideas and attending gatherings. Among others, Sidi met with members of the UC Berkeley African Studies Program, the Christensen Fund, the Native American Studies Center at Stanford University, the Native American representative for the Utah Government, Forrest Cucb, and members of the Leakey Foundation including President, Bill Wirthlin and Trustee, Don Dana. Victoria Waldock, a TARA Executive Board member, also hosted Sidi both in San Francisco and in Utah, and together with Laurence Beasley, and Craig Barney, former President of the Utah Rock Art Association, took Sidi on a rock art and Native American landscapes trip to Utah’s canyon lands.

Sidi explained his interest in meeting Native Americans, pointing out mutual commonalities between Tuareg and some Native American peoples. Both are nomadic, desert peoples, with similar philosophies about the land as a resource and not something to own. Both have been oppressed by outside cultures. Both hold the arts in high value, with poetry, music and crafts such as jewelry and leather-making being central to their cultures. Both have a huge love and respect for the open landscape, valuing it more than material homes, and both have ancestors who created rock art. Sidi also very much enjoyed meeting members of the Christensen Fund, many of who are indigenous leaders themselves from all around the world. Sidi also enjoyed a ceremonial evening at the Seva Foundation, in Berkeley, an organization with several important goals for helping indigenous peoples with eye care, diabetes, and health and human rights issues.

Sidi reported that he particularly valued the opportunity to talk about his hopes for the future of his people. He stressed the importance of maintaining and further developing Tuareg involvement in heritage and community-based tourism in the Sahara. As stewards of the land, the nomadic Tuareg lifestyle is perfectly suited to desert and rock art tourism activities, and indeed it forms a vital part of their future survival as a semi-nomadic group. To this end, Sidi was able to make excellent connections in the USA for current and future tourism activities, and all who had the good fortune to meet and interact with him have gained an important set of insights into Tuareg culture and Sidi’s incisive perspectives.
The first phase of digitization of TARA’s slide collection which was concluded in August 2006 brought our archive to the database preparation level. Alec Campbell, one of TARA’s board members together with David Coulson, TARA’s Executive Chairman have been generating descriptions for the digitized rock art images. Through their immense dedication, more than 9,000 digital images have been comprehensively described.

TARA’s archive has also evolved with technology; currently we are working with original images taken from digital cameras to complement our slide images. This technological advancement has reduced our workload on slide scanning, digital cleaning and colour correction. However the biggest challenge is to keep the digital copies safe since there are no originals in physical format. To date TARA’s archive can boast about the quality of its output as we experience an increase in terms of the 11,000 high resolution digital images recorded in 2006 which have this year risen to 13,500.

TARA has partnered with Aluka, an international collaborative initiative based in the USA, since 2003 in the digitization of its collection of African rock art images. The Aluka Digital Library includes a wide variety of high-quality scholarly materials ranging from archival documents, periodicals, books, reports, manuscripts, and reference works, to three-dimensional models, maps, oral histories, plant specimens, photographs, and slides. One of Aluka’s objectives is to provide African scholars and students access to scholarly materials originally from Africa, but now out of their reach. To find out more visit www.aluka.org.

Earlier this year TARA published the official proceedings of their November 2004 Rock Art Conference, “The Future of Africa’s Past”. The publication has a total of one hundred and forty pages and one hundred and thirty full color images. It is available from TARA at a cost of US$ 25. You will soon be able to order it online.

From April to August 2007, TARA commissioned Lorna Abungu to carry out research into the efficacy of its current online presence. The research included consultations with TARA and its stakeholders in order to establish objectives of the new web site, and to define and propose the content, technical specifications, design and required interface elements as well as for its good management.

The research has looked into current technological trends and the various opportunities of an online cultural resource for professional, educational and lay use. Lorna, together with the Nairobi company, Wildebeest Graphic Creations & Production Ltd, have embarked on the implementation phase of the project in the hopes of having a trial version of the new site up and running by early 2008. Lorna and Wildebeest teamed up in 2005 to create the internationally award winning site for AFRICOM, the International Council of African Museums. For any comments or queries, please contact <taraonline@africanrockart.org>.
**UNESCO Partners’ Day, Paris**

Every year, the World Heritage Centre holds a Partners’ Day, inviting selected partners to highlight their involvement with UNESCO in providing technical expertise, training, resource mobilization and communication for World Heritage. In May 2007, David Coulson was invited to a Partners’ Day panel discussion on Paris in the framework of “The PACT for World Heritage Conservation”. The focus was on the latest partnership activities and answering the question “Why are partnerships important?” The goal was to address crucial elements to partnership development in a themed format. Four themes highlighted partners’ involvement in providing technical expertise, training, resource mobilization and communication and information technology and how these benefited World Heritage conservation.

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**Valcamonica Rock Art Symposium, Italy**

In the same month David was invited to participate in an international symposium, “Rock art in the framework of the cultural heritage”, which took place in Valcamonica, Italy. He presented a paper entitled “Documentation as a management tool, the task of the TARA organization and the Case Study of the Air Mountains rock art site, Niger”. The meeting was jointly organized by UNESCO’s World Heritage Centre and the International Institute for Prehistoric Art (CCSP). The workshop was a milestone to develop an Action Plan for Rock Art sites inscribed on the World Heritage List (or on the Tentative List).

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**Leakey Foundation Lectures and Texas Visit - USA**

In March 2007, David Coulson presented a series of public lectures in New Mexico and in California, “Art for the Ages: Raising Awareness of Prehistoric African Rock Art”. The first lecture was hosted by the School for Advanced Research (SAR) in Santa Fe at the Lensic Theatre and was preceded by a reception hosted by Leakey Foundation Trustees, Joan Donner and Naoma Tate. The main lecture in Los Angeles was held at the Getty Center and was preceded by a reception given by the Director of the Getty Conservation Institute, Dr Timothy Whalen. The lectures were organized and sponsored by the Leakey Foundation whose mission is to increase scientific knowledge and public understanding of human origins, evolution, behavior and survival.

In early March 2007, David went to Texas on his way to New Mexico. Here he visited the Shumla School / Project near the Rio Grande, courtesy of its founders Dr Carolyn Boyd and Dr Megan Biesele. Carolyn showed David how Shumla is teaching the local people about their indigenous culture, including their ancient rock art. She also took David to see some of the amazing rock paintings she has brought to the attention of the world.

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**TARA / Alliance Française Exhibition**

Thanks to the Alliance Française, Nairobi, TARA produced earlier this year an exhibition entitled “Window on Africa’s Past” which opened in February 2007 at the French Cultural Centre in Nairobi. The exhibition was officially opened by the French Ambassador, H.E. Elisabeth Barbier. The inauguration of this multi-faceted exhibition marked the beginning of a tour which will take the show to around fifteen different countries.
In 2007, Tara received a substantial grant from the Kenyan Tourism Trust Fund / TTF (EU Funding) to promote rock art tourism in Suba District. The project is being implemented in collaboration with the National Museum of Kenya (NMK), the Abasuba Community Peace Museum as well as the local community. This is a one year project focusing on five interrelated objectives.

**Increase awareness of rock art among local community:** It is only when communities fully appreciate the cultural value of the rock art sites that they can be able to harness the potential value in terms of tourism and the benefits which this brings. It also enables them to take a more active role in the conservation and management of the sites. Increased awareness will be achieved through building capacity of community representatives by offering training on rock art and other cultural heritage in the area. They then will disseminate the information to the community at large. Other aspects of training include: public speaking, people mobilization skills, networking and event organization management.

**Promote and market rock art for local and international tourism:** The project will focus on presenting and marketing rock art and other attractions of the district both to local and international visitors. Suba district is on the western circuit, which has been a key focus in terms of recent tourism promotion, and this will be a new offering in the tourism products already in existence. This will be done through production of marketing collateral such as pamphlets, brochures as well as advertisement in local and international media. Other activities include: training in tourism, hospitality and marketing, creation of a brand, website development and networking with tour operators to develop and promote rock art safaris.

**Conserve the sites:** The input of the community has been sought throughout all the project stages, hence we believe that they will have a sense of ownership for the heritage and work towards protecting and promoting it for posterity. The project will also entail conducting an Environmental Impact Assessment, development of a conservation management plan and training in the management and conservation of sites.

**Develop sites:** Creation of the necessary infrastructure around the sites will open up the area for tourism and community development. One of the most ambitious aspects of this project is the construction of a museum and a community centre. There will also be basic camping facilities, new docks and piers, better paths and signage.

**Improve living standards and reduce poverty:** This project encourages direct involvement of communities in management of sites making them the main beneficiaries of the project. Since the opening of Abasuba Community Peace Museum in August 2005, the community has effectively managed these sites through site committees. The income generated, mainly from entry and guide fees, has been used not only to develop the sites but also as an investment in community welfare such as education of orphans, support programs for the elderly and payment of nursery school teachers.

After the implementation of the TTF funded project, the Abasuba Community Peace Museum is to be guided in the management of the site by guidelines spelt out in a revenue sharing agreement. This project is envisioned to set the pace for rock art tourism in Kenya and beyond.
In May this year TARA and the National Museums of Kenya held a very successful community workshop whose goal was to optimise community involvement and participation in management and conservation of the Kakapel rock art site. Attended by over 25 community members including the local chief and councilor, this workshop marked the beginning of the consultative process of usefully engaging the local community at Kakapel in management of the local cultural heritage.

Some of the aims of the workshop and its significance as cultural heritage, NMK, TARA, community) in management were; to enhance participants’ understanding of rock art, discuss and understand roles of various stakeholders (e.g. conservation of the site, discuss and understand perceptions and expectations of the community with regard to the rock art site, explore possible income generation activities/areas for the community.

The community members candidly and elaborately outlined their expectations of the Kakapel rock art site with a wish to participate more actively in site management and marketing of the site and other attractions of Teso District being emphasized. The workshop was officially opened by Dr Idles Farah, Director General of the NMK accompanied by TARA’s Executive Chairman, David Coulson and facilitated by Peter Okwaro (NKM), Hosea Wandere (NKM), TARA’s COO, Terry Little, TARA’s Community Projects Manager, Gladys Nyasuna-Wanga, TARA’s Operations Assistant, Eunice Mbindyo, and Abasuba Community Peace Museum curator, Jack Obonyo, also made very stimulating presentations. TARA would like to thank the Kakapel Site Manager, Odanga Imbahale, as well as the entire Kakapel community for making this workshop a success.

Libya Project Status

TARA plans to organize the delayed laser scanning expedition to Saharan Libya in February 2008. This trip will be largely funded through the National Geographic Society in Washington DC. David Coulson recently travelled to the Libya capital, Tripoli, for meetings with the Libyan Director of Antiquities, Dr Guima Anagi, to pave the way for this expedition. TARA received official approval in 2006 for this project.

TARA’s application to the World Monuments Fund (WMF) to have the Mathenous Rock Art Site in Fezzan, Libya listed on their 2008 Watchlist of the World’s Most Endangered Sites has been successful. And once again, an image by David Coulson of the now famous “Fighting Cats” has been featured on the WMF promotional materials (the Dabous Giraffe was featured in 2000). The project was also selected to receive matching funds through the Robert W Wilson Challenge to Conserve Our Heritage. TARA is currently trying to mobilize those matching funds.
In late July this year, TARA’s recording crew, David Coulson and Alec Campbell, recorded a rock art site at Kimberley in the Northern Cape where they met Dr David Morris from the MacGregor Museum in Kimberley. They then proceeded to Vryburg, Kuruman, Prieska and Van Wyksvlei areas. Over a period of 6 days the group travelled nearly 2,000 kms and recorded 12 sites. Most of them were known by Morris, however, some had never been recorded using modern photographic equipment. The group revisited Springbokoog (Springbok Eye), images of which were published in Coulson and Campbell’s book, “African Rock Art”. Janette Deacon has also published a book on this site entitled “My Heart Stands in the Hill” in collaboration with Craig Foster. The most remarkable site visited by the group was the Kinderdam, north of Vryburg, a large but little known engraving site with exceptional imagery first recorded by the Fochs. They then revisited the Wildebeskuit site north-west of Kimberley where a rock art tourism project has been developed. There is now a reception centre at the site run by members of a local San community who were moved from their previous home at Smitsdrif in the Northern Cape (these were the bushmen who came from Camp Omega, Northern Namibia, and who opted to move in search of a better life after Namibian independence). This community provides guides for people visiting the site. It was very interesting for us to see how this project had been set up and is now being managed.

Other sites recorded include the Kalabasput located near Van Wyksvlei not far from Springbokoog, Rietfontein, a very interesting and unusual “herder” painting site in a deep gorge which cuts into a 200 metre escarpment is also known as the Groot Kloof “Big Gorge”. Some of the paintings in this site looked so fresh that they could have been made yesterday, but in reality were probably made centuries ago.

They also recorded the Wonderwerk site, a national monument, situated not far from Kuruman. Alec Campbell and David Coulson visited this site in 1996 and recorded some of the paintings near the front of the cave some of which have been dated to less than 11,000 years old. Recently published results from the excavations confirm that this cave may be the oldest continuously inhabited/used cave in the world with the oldest dates going back about one million years.

Danielskuit, a recent engraving site ascribed to Griqua artists, is located near Kuruman where the team recorded various geometrics and footprints. In Southern Botswana, north of Lobatse, Alec and David visited a cave in the Manyelanong Mountain where they recorded some very interesting “herder” paintings, including several black in-filled elephants, small spotted white giraffes and some human stick figures. Before this trip Alec Campbell had also visited a farm in eastern Botswana’s Tuli Block together with Mike Main, where he recorded about 50 rock engravings, mainly of animal tracks.
Since late 2006, TARA has recorded a number of new sites in Kenya. In December 2006 David Coulson recorded two important cupule sites in the remote Mt. Nyiro at the edge of the Rift Valley. The smaller of these sites could once have been used as a rock gong and the larger one at the foot of the mountain to the south, appears to still be in use. This second site consists of a large granite boulder with hundreds of cupules situated on a traditional tribal boundary. Near it are piles of loose stones and informants told us that each stone represents an animal lost in tribal raids. I also noticed that people had recently painted the interiors of some of the cupules with red ochre, sometimes with crosses. However, the cupules themselves are likely to be several thousand years old.

In January I visited another area of northern Kenya – Laikipia, where I recorded three new sites. One of these was in such a remote location that we had to fly there by helicopter picking up two Yaku (Ndorobo) guides who would lead us to a painting site they knew. We landed near the base of the mountain he indicated and climbed through thick trees high up the mountain for over 200 metres. Eventually, we stopped close to a cliff face and realized we had reached our destination. Totally exhausted I sat on a log near my brother who had unwisely come along for the ride! I asked the nearest of our guides where the paintings were and he said, “There are no paintings here. This is just a site.” So we climbed back down the mountain in silence and endeavoured to retrace our steps to find the helicopter. We spread out in a long extended line to search the bush, going back and forth and in this way we eventually found the big machine!

On the way back I asked our guides if there was any other painting site even if the art was not the work of their people/ancestors. One of them pointed to the top of a huge boulder in the valley near the main riverbed saying that he had heard there were paintings there. Our pilot landed the helicopter on the top of the huge boulder, its top being level with the forest canopy. Our first challenge was to get down to ground level. There was no easy way but in the end we found a tree to climb down and near the river was a big shelter with paintings. This trip had not been in vain after all!

The most interesting site recorded on this Laikipia trip was in the Lewa Downs Conservancy north of Mt. Kenya. The site consisted of another large boulder high above the river. At the base was another shelter and this time the paintings were geometric and abstract - white concentric circles, grids and lines on the pinkish rock surface. These were identifiable to us as Twa paintings, perhaps made between 1,000 and 3,000 years ago. The Twa are a hunter-gatherer people now extinct whose art is found from Zambia and Mozambique in the south through east and central Africa up to Congo, Gabon and Senegal. In the Lake Victoria basin similar sites with concentric circles were still used until recently by the present inhabitants for rain making rituals.
**Rock Art in the Nairobi National Game Park**

Perhaps our most exciting ‘discovery’ this year was a rock painting site in the middle of Nairobi National Park - on our doorstep! For several years a Nairobi friend of mine, Tor Allan had been telling me about some rock paintings he remembered seeing over 40 years ago in the Nairobi National Park. The trouble was, he wasn’t too sure where they were anymore. When planning our April Board Meeting, I called his son, Jan, and asked him to find out from Tor where he thought the paintings were. One April morning Jan, the Board members and I together with armed park rangers searched the lower part of a Mukoiyet gorge where Tor thought he’d seen the art. We had no idea where in the gorge the paintings were. The hours passed and morning turned into afternoon, and when by 4:00 pm, exhausted and ripped to shreds by “wait-a-bit” thorns we had still not found anything, we called it a day. Jan then took me aside and said he had some young energetic friends who might like the challenge of doing a thorough search for the site. By this stage I was doubtful that the paintings even existed, but agreed it sounded like a good idea. Three weeks later Jan called me to say that his friends (James Borman and Andrew Molinaro) had searched and found the site which, as it turned out, was only 400 metres from the road! So the next weekend they took me, my daughter Alice, and TARA board member George Abungu, and his daughter, Ajuma, to see it. When we got there I realized we must have walked right above it the last time. Everything was so overgrown. There was quite a large number of paintings which appeared to be Maasai paintings. There was also a strange white grid within a circle high up a cliff face, higher than a man could reach. My first impression was that these must be meat-feasting paintings and had probably been made in the last 100 years, yet some of them were different from the usual Maasai finger paintings. Could it be that some of them had been made by Wanderobo hunter-gatherers before colonization? And then there was the faint possibility that some of the paintings had been made by Twa forager hunters perhaps 1000 years ago or more. However, this seemed very unlikely. We then began to talk about our ‘find’ in practical terms. How would park visitors get here given the fact that they are not allowed to get out of their car in case they walk into a lion or buffalo? Clearly they would have to be accompanied by rangers and so would need to talk to KWS and to the Friends of Nairobi Park (FONP) to see what could be done to develop the site as a new attraction. Who would ever have thought we would have found a rock art site within a few miles of Kenya’s capital city and of our own Africa headquarters?!

**Visit from the Past**

Staff members from the Palaeontological Scientific Trust (PAST) and performers from their educational program, Walking Tall, visited TARA in August 2007. A South African-based organization, PAST focuses on the promotion of public education, particularly among school children, about their paleo-anthropological heritage. PAST also offers grants, bursaries and scholarships for the study of palaeo-anthropology. As palaeontology and rock art are interrelated, a partnership between the two organizations could be in the FUTURE.

**Namibia’s Twyfelfontein - World Heritage Site**

In June this year the Twyfelfontein rock engraving site in Namibia was officially listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Twyfelfontein is the largest rock art engraving site in Southern Africa comprising several thousand engravings thought to be around 3,000 years old.

A section of a major Twyfelfontein panel depicts a variety of engraved animals
Desert Museum, Northern Kenya

The Desert Museum in Turkana’s Northern Kenya was built by the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) in 2005/6 on the eastern shore of Lake Turkana, just north of the town of Loiyangalani. The museum construction was funded by the Italian Government.

In 2006 TARA was approached by the NMK asking for help and advice to design and produce a rock art exhibit for the museum. David Coulson and Gladys Nyasuna travelled to Loiyangalani in November 2006 together with the Cultural Attachés from the American and German Embassies for the opening of the rock art project there. The Director General of the National Museums, Dr Idle Farah and the Director of Sites and Monuments, Dr Mzalendo Kibunjia also flew in to join them along with two members of the NMK Board. Apart from visiting the Desert Museum the group also attended a Rock Art Tourism training session organized by TARA and the NMK. One of the ideas discussed by this group was the possibility of organizing a Lake Turkana Cultural Festival to coincide with the official opening of the Museum in 2008 with the idea that the Festival might subsequently become an annual event in itself, rather like the Lamu Festival on the coast. This area is particularly colourful and interesting due to the diversities of cultures found here. These include the Turkana, Samburu, El Molo, Gabbra and Rendille peoples.

TARA has received a grant from the German Embassy to design and organize two exhibitions in Northern Kenya, one permanent exhibition in the Desert Museum and one travelling exhibition which will go to eight different centres in northern Kenya opening at the new Wajir Museum. Following this, working with the NMK, it was agreed that TARA would in fact design and produce the entire photographic exhibition required for the first phase of the Desert Museum opening. In other words, TARA will not only produce the rock art exhibit, but also provide cultural photographs from its archives from this region to accompany ethnographic objects collected by the Museums. The gallery will also feature a 3D scale model of Lake Turkana.

In August this year, David Coulson, was invited to fly up to Turkana with the United States Ambassador, Michael Ranneberger. Together they visited one of the rock art sites closest to Loiyangalani where an official signing session took place to formalize a grant from the US Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation for an NMK project here.

Rock Art Exhibition at the Nairobi Museum

TARA has been working with the National Museums of Kenya to produce a major exhibition on rock art for the grand re-opening of the museum scheduled for late 2007. The exhibition will highlight the historic and cultural importance of rock art in Kenya, East Africa and throughout the African continent. It is being mounted in a large gallery overlooking the Ahmed Courtyard, and includes a large rock shelter reconstruction, dozens of panels and photos about African rock art and an interactive area for school groups.
**DAVID KIYAGA-MULINDWA**

Dr David Kiyaga-Mulindwa passed away on May 16, 2007 in Uganda, aged 63. He held various academic positions throughout Africa during his career. From 1970-1972, he was a curator of History and Archaeology at the Uganda National Museum in Kampala. From 1974-1976 he was a Research Assistant in the Department of Archeology at the University of Legon in Ghana. Between 1976-1993 David worked and held a number of positions at the University of Botswana, where he was also the Founder and Coordinator of the Archaeology Unit from 1985. In 1993 he returned to Uganda where until 1996 he was a Consultant and Research Affiliate at the Centre for Basic Research in Kampala. Between 1996-1997 he was a Visiting Professor at the University of Fort Hare. In the 1980s and 1990s, David was involved in a unique SIDA/SAREC sponsored regional archaeological cooperation programme, ‘Urban Origins in Eastern and Southern Africa’ that brought together colleagues from Botswana, the Comoro Islands, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Somalia, Sweden, Tanzania, Zanzibar and Zimbabwe. This was followed by the programme ‘Human Responses and Contributions to Environmental Change in Africa’, in which he was equally active. Until his untimely death, David was an Associate Professor and Chairman of the Programme Committee, History Department, Kyambogo University, Kampala (Uganda). He was the President of the Pan-African Association for Prehistory and Related Studies, and a dedicated member of TARA’s Board of Directors.

**JOHN ROBINSON**

by David Coulson

John Robinson, international sculptor and the co-founder of the Bradshaw Foundation, passed away on April 6, 2007. I first met John Robinson indirectly through TARA’s founding patron, Mary Leakey. I noticed a magnificent book on her coffee table entitled ‘Bradshaws’ and asked Mary how I could get hold of a copy. She replied, “Well there’s this man John Robinson who sent it to me, so why don’t you write to him and ask how you can get a copy?” So I wrote to John and he kindly sent me a copy. When I was next in England I went to meet him. From the word go, John was enthusiastic about our work and indeed when TARA was formerly registered the following year the foundation Chairman, Damon de Laszlo, gave me valuable advice and was TARA’s first official donor. John was the driving force behind the establishment and development of the Bradshaw Foundation in 1992. In the mid-1990s the foundation decided to expand its activities beyond Australian rock art to include African rock art. In 1999 TARA was looking for donors to fund the moulding of two lifesize giraffe carvings in Niger’s Sahara Desert - the Dabous Giraffes. Jean Clottes, also a member of Bradshaw’s Advisory Board, and I decided to approach John Robinson and he was able to persuade Robert Hefner and Damon de Laszlo to agree to fund the project. The Dabous expedition took place at the beginning of 1999 and the story of this remarkable adventure was told by me in the National Geographic Magazine, June 1999 as well as on the Bradshaw Foundation website. John was fascinated by the Dabous Giraffes, proposing all sorts of wild theories as to who the artists were and why they created them! Later I organized a desert safari for our sponsors of which John loved every minute. His enthusiasm for rock art was infectious.
Since its creation in 1997, TARA has depended on the support and trust of foundations, businesses and individuals to enable it to grow and carry out its mission of documenting and preserving Africa’s rock art and ensuring that local communities and the general public both appreciate and benefit from this heritage. We would like to recognize the continued and vital support of the Ford Foundation, the Robert H and Ann Lurie Foundation and the Andrew Mellon Foundation to the development of the institution and to the growth and variety of its activities. The Arcadia Trust (formerly the Lisbet Rausing Charitable Fund) of the UK has also, recently, become an important contributor to TARA in 2007.

The Alliance Française in Nairobi has been an important partner in organizing an exhibition on rock art which is currently travelling around the African continent. The regional Alliance Française headquarters in Madagascar has made a substantial financial contribution to the costs of the exhibition.

The French Embassy in Nairobi has contributed to TARA research activities in 2007. The German Embassy has provided generous support to the Desert Museum and a travelling exhibition in the Northern Kenya region. TARA continues to enjoy the fruitful collaboration of the Embassy of the United States. We are extremely grateful to the National Museums of Kenya for their valued partnership in a number of activities this year including an invitation to create a premiere exhibition at the grand re-opening of the Nairobi Museum in late 2007. The EU Support Programme is providing funding for this exhibition.

TARA has been assisted in 2007 by funding from the European Development Fund, provided through the Tourism Trust Fund (TTF) (see page 7). The TTF is a joint initiative of the European Union and the Government of Kenya and aims to assist community development and conservation of natural and cultural resources through direct assistance to the tourism industry of Kenya.

We wish to acknowledge UNESCO for its collaboration with TARA (see page 6). ICOM, the International Council of Museums, has supported TARA by providing information about the threatened state of African rock art in its 2007 publications and ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites has supported African rock art research. Thanks also to the World Monument Fund for its support by enlisting the Mathendous Rock Art site on its 2008 List of Most Endangered Heritage (see page 8).

We would like to recognize our special relationship with Aluka, a not-for-profit international collaboration of education and cultural institutions building scholarly resources from and about Africa with whom TARA has been digitizing its image collection since 2003. TARA enjoys the on-going support of the National Geographic Society.

TARA is extremely grateful for generous donations from Bruce and Carolyn Ludwig, Richard Oldfield and Joan Travis. Rick Anderson (AFEW) contributed funds to enable TARA to purchase a new large-scale printer which is vital to our operations. Halvor Astrup has also provided us valuable support (use of his helicopter!). We received in-kind support in 2007 from Brussels Airline and World Wide Movers in Nairobi. Thanks also for the contributions from the Arthur Blank Foundation, the Theodore Dubin Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Chellie Kew. Contributions were also received from African Tours, African Alchemy, Amolo Ng’weno, Anthony Fagin and Sue Conford.

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We must save this cultural heritage before it is too late.

It is TARA’s initiative to help preserve rock art, this is why we are calling for your support.

www.africanrockart.org