AFCP - Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation, United States of America

AFCP supports the preservation of cultural sites, cultural objects, and forms of traditional cultural expression in more than 100 developing countries around the world. AFCP supported projects include the restoration of ancient and historic buildings; assessment and conservation of rare manuscripts and museum collections; preservation and protection of important archaeological sites; and the documentation of vanishing traditional craft techniques and indigenous languages.

www.eca.state.gov.

DOA - Division of Antiquities in Tanzania

The DOA is a department under the Tanzania Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism. It is mandated with the responsibility of protecting and managing the country’s cultural and historical heritage resources. The Division has spearheaded efforts to list various historical and cultural sites in Tanzania as World Heritage sites, among them being the Kondoa rock art sites (inscribed as a World Heritage site in 2006).

www.mnrt.go.tz.

TARA - Trust for African Rock Art

TARA is committed to recording the rich rock art heritage of the African continent, to making this information widely accessible and, to the extent possible, safeguarding those sites most threatened by humans and nature. To achieve its mission, TARA works closely with communities where rock art is found as well as with national and international heritage bodies including the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

www.africanrockart.org.

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Front Cover:
Top, Kondoa Engagers’ Workshop (centre) and fine-line red paintings at Kondoa. Centre, Typical Kondoa landscape. Bottom, Late White paintings (centre) and fine-line red paintings at Kondoa.

Back Cover:
Top, Bubu River in dry season and Late White paintings at Kondoa. Bottom, Head of kudu bull, antelope, schematic man with elongated body and man holding bow. Late White paintings at Kondoa.
African Rock Art

Every continent, except Antarctica has rock art, but Africa has the greatest variety and some of the oldest rock art on earth. Africa has far more rock art than any other continent, with at least 10 million images spread across more than 30 countries. Africa’s rock paintings and engravings are our heritage: a heritage that informs us how our ancestors thought and perceived their world. They are the earliest remaining evidence of spiritual/religious beliefs; they speak of Africa’s rich history and culture, and a time long before writing was invented. Across Africa today, researchers record and study the art, seeking its age, meaning and original purposes. Aware of emerging conservation problems, African governments are creating management plans and encouraging local communities to become involved in the art’s protection. Currently, there are 11 UNESCO World Heritage rock art sites in Africa. Kondoa is the first such site in East Africa.

Nelson Mandela and Kofi Annan

Statements

“Africa’s rock art is the common heritage of all Africans, but it is more than that. It is the common heritage of humanity.”

President Nelson Mandela

“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…Africa’s rock art is the common heritage of all Africans, and of all people…Perhaps the greatest threat (to this heritage) is neglect. A lack of resources, combined with a lack of official interest, has left too many rock art sites unguarded against vandals and thieves. 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.”

Kofi Annan, Secretary-General United Nations (2005)
Tanzanian Rock Art

The Kondoa region of central Tanzania has the richest concentration of rock art in the country. In 2006, Kondoa was nominated and listed as one of UNESCO’s World Heritage rock art sites in Africa. There are rock art sites in many different parts of Tanzania, found near Singida, Iringa, and in the Serengeti National Park as well as in the Lake Victoria and Eyasi Basins. Paintings at these sites depict animals such as antelope, elephant, giraffe, and impala as well as human figures and some geometric shapes. There is also rock art in the north east (near Mount Kilimanjaro) and in the south west of the country. Some of the most recent paintings are from the so-called Late White Period (last 1,500 years). These are typically geometric or abstract in style including some schematic human figures, as distinct from the earlier red paintings of animals and humans. The latter are mainly attributed to ancestors of today’s Sandawe and Hadza people who are found in western Kondoa (Sandawe) and in the Lake Eyasi Basin (Hadza). Both groups speak “click” languages similar to the languages spoken by today’s Bushmen/San people. Of the above art, it is believed that the fine-line red paintings were the work of ancestral Sandawe. It is now known that the Sandawe are genetically linked to the Bushmen, from more than 10,000 years ago. Meanwhile the Hadza, who have different genetic origins, speak a different “click” language which the Sandawe cannot understand. Traditionally, the Sandawe and Hadza are hunter-gathering people and there is also a third hunter-gathering group who no longer survive in Tanzania, the Twa or Batwa who have also left their paintings in this region.

I have often wished over the years that the Tanzanian rock paintings might be better known and more widely appreciated. They are so beautiful and so important and are disappearing so fast.

Dr Mary Leakey, Renowned Palaeontologist, 1983

Rock Art of Kondoa

The Kondoa rock art sites are located on the slopes of the Maasai escarpment that flanks the western side of the Great Rift Valley in central Tanzania. There are dozens of caves and shelters with paintings of elongated people, animals, hunting scenes, and abstract markings. Like most hunter-gatherer paintings found in eastern and southern Africa, the Kondoa fine-line paintings have generally been dated at more than 2,000 years old.

The art in Kondoa is also associated with pastoralist and agriculturalist communities. The paintings are directly and indirectly associated with the living traditions of the communities living near the sites and can illustrate cultural continuity among the societies that have inhabited the Kondoa area over time.

A park ranger in Moru Koppies, Serengeti National Park, in front of a rock gong which may have been used for divining and communications.

Red in-filled paintings of giraffes facing right at large rock shelter near Pahi.

Typical landscape including a large granite outcrop on the hillside above Pahi. At the base of the outcrop is a rock art site. Inset: Fine-line painting of a group of women with headdresses holding hands.
All three rock shelters are easily accessible from below. These three sites face the northern Steppe. The main site Mungomi wa Kolo (Kolo 1 site) is a massive and imposing rock shelter that can be reached by following a winding footpath from the end of a four-wheel drive dirt road (Bwasiri 2006). Most of the art on these shelters consists of fine-line red paintings of animals and people. These are the most famous of the Kondoa paintings and are also the most accessible. Kolo 1 site has many paintings, some of which are very faded, and is still used for secret rituals by the local community. The other two shelters (Kolo 2 and 3) are not far from the main shelter but are much smaller. The paintings are however very varied and interesting. During the 1950s, Dr Mary Leakey (legendary East African palaeontologist and discoverer of 3.7 million year Laetoli footprints in Tanzania) traced and reproduced many of the paintings at these sites. One of these reproductions is on page ii.
Pahi Sites
Several of the main Pahi shelters are located near the bottom of the escarpment, not far from Pahi village. The Pahi sites showcase different styles of art, associated with the three groups of people (hunter-gatherers, agriculturists, and pastoralists) that have inhabited the region over time. The images found at Pahi include giraffe, eland, kudu, zebra, human figures, and geometric designs.

The People
Kondoa District has been inhabited by three major groups: hunter-gatherers (Sandawe and Hadza); pastoralists (Iraqw, Burenge, Wasi, Aragwa, Datoga, and Maasai); and Bantu language-speakers (Warangi). The Warangi are the largest ethnic group in Kondoa (Bwasiri 2006). They are known throughout the country by their Swahili name of Warangi and their Kirangi language. Subsistence agriculture is the main economic activity for the people of Kondoa. The main types of crops planted include sunflower, onions, maize, beans, and millet.

Warangi have practiced rituals for more than a century. There is no clear time when the practice started. Available evidence suggests that it has been more than two generations. In the past, elders met and discussed matters facing their communities.

Appeasement of their ancestors was through rituals which were practiced every year. Rain making rituals were conducted every October or November before the rain season started. Circumcision ceremonies were, on the other hand, initiated by community members who had enough food to feed the circumcised youth.

Other rituals like traditional healing practices took place at any time of the year. There were also rituals which were performed by elders to protect their communities from diseases and enemies. The rock art sites, especially Kolo, have been linked to these rituals.
Other Attractions

Historical Structures
In Kolo, there is the residence of Chief Mtemi and the Daati remnants, which are believed to be homesteads of the early Kolo inhabitants. In the Chuomo area, there is a magnificent waterfall that is believed to have special powers. There are several hot and cold springs in the area. The cold spring found at Mnenia is believed to have healing qualities and is surrounded by several sacred trees. In the past, women were not allowed into the area unless they were cleansed by the elders.

Kondoa Natural Hot Spring
Local oral history states that an elephant was seen entering this hot spring and that it never came out. It is believed that, after this incident, the volume of the spring increased significantly to the point where it now supplies water to the whole of Kondoa.

Tarangire National Park
Located in Bahati District, the park is close to Ngorongoro and Serengeti. It is right in the middle of the Tanzania northern circuit. This park is probably best known for its large herds of elephants, which are thought to be some of the largest in Tanzania. The park is adorned with beautiful baobab trees and a superb variety of wildlife. For more information, visit www.tanzaniaparks.com/tarangire.html.

Ngorongoro Conservation Area
Managed by the Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority, the main area attractions are the Ngorongoro Volcanic Crater (above right). This crater happens to be the world’s largest unbroken caldera. The crater hosts over 25,000 animals including Africa’s Big Five (lion, elephant, buffalo (right), rhino, and leopard). It was also declared a man and biosphere reserve in 1971, because the Maasai and the natural wildlife coexist in the area. For more information about the site, visit www.ngorongorocrater.org.
Olduvai Gorge
The prehistoric site is where the oldest hominid in eastern Africa was discovered in 1951.

Lake Manyara National Park
Lake Manyara is famous for two things: the large herds of elephants that can be seen lazing around and the tree climbing lions. The lake is also host to thousands of birds, cheetah, hippos, and the impala. The park might be small, but it hosts a good variety of wildlife and is definitely worth a visit. For more information, visit www.tanzaniaparks/manyara.html.

Serengeti National Park
In Maasai, ‘Serengeti’ means the land that never ends. The park is undoubtedly famous for the wildebeest and zebra migration. The park which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site also hosts the African Big Five, and other animals like the roan antelope, eland, Oryx, and gazelle. It also boasts over 500 birds species such as the falcon, secretary bird, and the Karamoja apalis. For more information about the site, visit www.serengeti.org.

Ol Doinyo Lengai Crater
‘Ol Doinyo Lengai’ means the Mountain of God in the Maasai language. This active volcano is situated in the Rift Valley north east of the Ngorongoro Crater. The last major eruption took place in 1968. The prevailing wind at that time carried the hot ash over the Serengeti Park where thousands of animals died as a result. The record of eruptions on the mountain dates back to 1883.
Rock Art Specialist, the late Alec Campbell of TARA, looking at a large panel of White Paintings at Pahi mainly featuring giraffe.
Conservation

Rock art is fragile and irreplaceable. It is threatened by natural phenomena (wind, sun, dust, and rain) but the greatest threat to the sites is human activities. Graffiti, charcoal burning, prospecting for treasure, deforestation, and cultivation in the conservation area are some of the main human activities that endanger the Kondoa sites. In 2009, TARA formalised a partnership with the DOA in order to implement a Kondoa Community Rock Art Project. The project aims to promote Kondoa’s rock art for tourism in a sustainable manner ensuring that the accruing benefits are felt at the community level. When communities are engaged in the management of the sites, there is a higher chance of wanting to protect the sites. In 2009, a series of community meetings were held resulting in an action plan that addresses implementation of the recommendations made in the 2004 Kondoa Rock Art Sites Management Plan. Under the Antiquities Act of 1964, any rock painting or immovable object painted, sculpted, carved, incised or modified by any human agency in Tanzania before the year 1863 are protected by law.

Additional conservation efforts include a DOA/AFCP/TARA project involving a community engagers’ workshop, research on local beliefs, signage placement, training, and a local campsite initiative. TARA and the DOA have also received funding from the African World Heritage Fund to work with communities to ensure protection and promotion of the sites in Kondoa.
You can get to Kondoa World Heritage Site (Kolo town, north of Kondoa town) by private car via Arusha in the north or Dodoma in the south. From Arusha, it takes approximately 3 ½ hours of driving time to get to Kolo. From Dodoma, it should take a bit less. You can also go by bus from Arusha or Dodoma, in each case approximately a five-hour journey. Buses run daily from both cities. From Kondoa, Kolo is around one hour by bus. Visitors coming by bus from Arusha should get off at Kolo bus stop before reaching Kondoa.

Planning Your Stay

The Mary Leakey campsite (next to the Kolo River) offers attractive views of the Kondoa area and the dominant *Brachystegia* tree species known locally as Miombo woodlands. The campsite is next to the track which leads to the Kolo rock art sites. It is located where the renowned palaeontologist Dr Mary Leakey used to camp when working here in the 1950s. Refer page ii for an example of Mary Leakey’s drawings. The campsite is community-run. Telephone: +255 798 721605. Other accommodation options in Kondoa: New Geneva in Africa Hotel. Telephone: +255 787 894804. New Planet Hotel. Telephone: +255 784 669322. Sunset Beach Hotel. Telephone: +255 784 948858.

For further information, please contact the DOA (doa@amnrt.go.tz) or TARA (tara@africanrockart.org).