

# EXPRESSION

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**THE ROLE OF WOMEN  
IN PREHISTORIC AND TRIBAL SOCIETIES**

## EDITORIAL NOTES

### THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN PREHISTORIC AND TRIBAL SOCIETIES

What can we learn from prehistoric and tribal art about the role of women in society? What do male and female images reveal to us about gender relations in the course of time? This issue presents some pertinent cases. Other articles may find space in forthcoming issues. Human society has a variety of social structures, where crowded urban congregations exist along with tribal agricultural villages and nomadic clans of hunters. These three and other patterns of society can also live near each other. Near the town of Darwin in Australia, there are clans of semi-nomadic Aboriginal hunter-gatherers, near the town of Beer-Sheba in Israel there are tribes of semi-nomadic Bedouin pastoralists, and near the town of Dodoma in Tanzania there are tribal farming villages and semi-nomadic clans of hunter-gatherers. Each society has its own behavioral habits and male and female roles vary. Often, humans maintain their own traditions till they are conditioned by the influence of neighbors or by internal evolutions.

What can we learn about past habits? A group of 20 engraved stone blocks from the site of La Ferrassie and surroundings in Dordogne, France, reveals the habit of the exchange of women between clans some 40,000 years ago. Apparently, women were traded like goods (*Decoding Prehistoric Art*, Atelier. Edit, 2015). Until 100 years ago some hunter-gatherer Aboriginal tribes in the Central Australian Desert used to perform the marriage of a girl by making her have sexual relations with all the totemic brothers of the husband to be (*Iniziazione e riti di passaggio*, Atelier. Edit, 2011). Among the Bedouin tribes of the Sinai Desert, some 50 years ago, a woman could be acquired with five camels (*Amore e sessualità*, Atelier. Edit, 2018). Gradually new information is forming a contribution to an overview. Colleagues and friends are invited to share their knowledge. Urban societies are a cultural pattern of the last 5,000 years and farming villages developed in the last 12,000 years; before that humanity was made up of hunter-gatherer semi-nomadic groups. These various patterns of societies have the common feature of being all composed of groups or families, nuclear or larger, where the actors are men and women. Even in urban societies the relations between genders are not always the same. The variations of customs and habits between major towns like Kabul and Los Angeles are as big as may be the difference between distinct human groups within one of these towns. What kind of relations existed between men and women in the different societies in the past? Social

structures, economic activities, ritual and ceremonial performances usually allot different tasks to males and females. How can both rock art and mobile art contribute to this search for a vital aspect of human relations?

The roles of the two genders vary in different types of social assemblages or ethnic groups, but some functions are permanently assigned to one of the two genders. Men cannot become pregnant and have children; they cannot breastfeed newborns and in various societies they are considered unfit to take care of them. Pregnant or breastfeeding women are considered to be inadequate for fighting or heavy tasks. Among hunter-gatherers, women are considered to be unfit for elephant or buffalo hunting. Following up the prey, killing it, cutting its meat, separating it from the carcass, carrying the pieces of meat for miles to the gathering place of the clan are the tasks of men. Each gender has its specific function in society, which may vary from society to society. Other gender tasks may vary according to social patterns. Cooking food is a primarily male task among hunting societies and a female task among farming societies; building huts and other structures is usually a male task; decorating such buildings is frequently a female task. Every gender has its own ritual and ceremonial practices which vary in different ethnic groups. In art production in many regions of the world, distinctive typologies and types of decoration show that the visual art produced by females is different from that produced by males.

Millions of images of men and women are present in the rock art and mobile art of five continents. They have been made by people, men and women, of distinct human societies in the course of millennia. What can we learn from all that about gender relations and in particular the role of women in various societies? In some prehistoric and tribal art images of women are dominant, in others they are ignored. In some rock art, female divinities are represented, in others women appear as sexual objects; in others again, they appear in dancing and ritual scenes or in taking care of children. Colleagues and friends, males and females, from different countries and different traditions are cordially invited to propose their notions, their experiences, and their texts about their areas of study or concern, in order to assemble a global overview on a fascinating theme, relevant for understanding ethnic, local, and universal trends. Please join these trials of understanding patterns and traditions, and global habits and variabilities in a vital aspect of human relations: gender relations. One of the mottos of conceptual anthropology is: "Recover the past to discover the present"! Submit your article, ideas, and suggestions, or ask for additional information at <atelier.etno@gmail.com>.

## EDITORIAL NOTE

EXPRESSION journal is published by Atelier Research Center in cooperation with UISPP-CISENP, the International Scientific Commission on the Intellectual and Spiritual Expressions of Non-Literate Peoples of the UISPP (*Union Internationale des Sciences Préhistoriques et Protohistoriques*, International Union of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences). The goal of EXPRESSION is to promote dialogue, knowledge, and ideas concerning the intellectual and spiritual expressions of non-literate societies. It is an open forum in conceptual anthropology. Colleagues having something pertinent to say will find space in this e-magazine, which is reaching people of culture and academic institutions in over 78 countries. Papers should have precise goals, conceived for this kind of audience, and possibly be well illustrated. Letters on current topics and short notes are welcome and may be included in the Discussion Forum section.

Authors are responsible for their ideas and for the information and illustrations they submit. Publication in EXPRESSION quarterly journal does not imply that the publisher and/or the editors agree with the ideas presented. Papers are submitted to reviewers for their evaluation, but controversial ideas, if they make sense, are not censured. New ideas and concepts are welcome; they may awaken debates and criticism. Time will be their judge. EXPRESSION is a free journal, not submitted to rhetorical and formal traditional regulations. It offers space to controversial issues, healthy realistic debates, and imaginative and creative papers, if they are conceptually reliable and respect the integrity and dignity of authors, colleagues, and readers.



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**Front page image:** a woman (on the right) with bracelets on her wrists (Sefar, Tassili). Photo enhanced with DStretch (after Soukopova, this issue).

# DISCUSSION FORUM

**The Discussion Forum invites readers to be active protagonists in debates of worldwide interest in Conceptual Anthropology.**

## DEFINING THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF *HOMO SAPIENS*

A forthcoming issue of EXPRESSION quarterly journal will face the identity of the common ancestor of the whole of modern humankind: early *Homo sapiens*. Who is he? Palaeontologists rely on skeletal features to classify *Homo sapiens*. But are bones sufficient to define the conceptual sapience of the *sapiens*? How may we classify the many skeletal materials of living populations today that show anatomical features not fully corresponding to the *sapiens* stereotype? Are Pygmies or Hottentots *sapiens*? Despite their distinct physical characters, they have the pertinent conceptual faculties and they are producers of elaborate visual art. Of course, they belong to *sapiens* societies. Conceptual anthropology considers that intellectual abilities define the *sapiens* identity. Among other tangible expressions of cultural identity, such as the refined typology of lithic industry, there is the habit of producing figurative art as a pattern of culture. Figurative art testifies to the ability to conceptualize an image, leading the hand to reproduce or idealize it. This is a major trend of the *sapiens* identity, implying the talent for synthesis, abstraction, and conceptualization. It indicates the skill of a logical concept of reality, allowing the visual transformation of reality into image: the materialization of ideas, the idealization of reality, and the visualization of the real and the unreal. It is a unique ability of the *sapiens* which opened up new horizons to cultural evolution. Despite the opposition of traditionalist tendencies, the terminology used by conceptual anthropology names *Homo sapiens* the maker of figurative art. In Eurasia, this pattern is present in the Upper Palaeolithic as the production of what traditional terms label *Homo sapiens-sapiens*. The terminology of conceptual anthropology eliminates the second *sapiens*, which is redundant.

In Africa, Eurasia, Australia, and the Americas, there are traces of visual markings, in the form of non-figurative signs, lines, dots, cup-marks, stencils of hands and other items copied, printed but not intentionally designed by the human hand. Such graphic markings are present before fig-

urative art already in the Middle Palaeolithic, though persisting into the Upper Palaeolithic and later. Some tribal groups still perform this kind of non-figurative graphics nowadays, as a means of communication, memorization, and for marking the territory. The producers of the Mousterian lithic industry, Neanderthals and other *Proto-sapiens* groups of the Middle Palaeolithic already performed this kind of graphic marking which is not yet figurative art.

Figurative depictions intentionally shaped by human hands are the tangible expression of the conceptual rationality of *Homo sapiens*. They appear suddenly, fast becoming a widespread pattern of culture in different areas in Eurasia, the Far East, and Australia, which are unlikely to have had direct contact at the time. They are the indicator of the presence of the mind of *Homo sapiens*. In Europe, the Near East, and Africa, *Proto-sapiens* graphic markings and hand stencils may go back over 70,000 years, while figurative art shaped by the hands of *Homo sapiens* is today considered to go back some 40,000 years.

According to available chronological dates obtained by laboratory analyses, such expressions of figurative visual art in Australia and Borneo, representing animals and/or human beings, are considered to be 20,000 years older than in Europe, going back c. 60,000 years. Is *Homo sapiens* present in Australia so much earlier than in Europe? The earliest dates of figurative art as a widespread cultural pattern so far come from Australia. Where did figurative art first start? Is *Homo sapiens* a single racial stock or are there several different cores of *sapiens*? If indeed *Homo sapiens* derives from a single nucleus, as currently maintained, where does he come from? Where did he originate? So far, the origins of *sapiens* have been considered to be in Africa. As defined in a previous issue of **EXPRESSION** (Issue no. 18), early traces of his figurative art are present in Tanzania. A succession of varied features of animal figures and a rich sequence of different stylistic phases hint at an early date for the earliest phases. But no precise dates are presently available.

How do we understand the discrepancies in dates? Various considerations are open to debate: any human ability necessarily precedes its material execution. Different conditions and different inspirations may cause its factual formulation. In other words, the mental ability of producing figurative art may be there in a latent form; its material realization may take place when conditions or events provoke it. Another consideration regards the missing evidence. Theoretically, if paintings on animal skins or on tree bark preceded the paintings on rock surfaces in Europe rather than in Australia, no evidence is available on materials that did not survive. Nevertheless, archaeology relies on findings and such discrepancies in the dates of the first appearance of figurative art remain an open question to be

understood and explained.

What caused the dynamics of diffusion? How did early *sapiens* walk all over the planet (yes: walked!!) from the African Cape to the Tasmanian Cape and the Fuegian Cape? He did not have any means of transportation, not even a bicycle. When the three capes were reached, the population density was most likely less than one soul per 100 sq. km. It was not overpopulation that caused migration. Other primates did not have the same diffusion. Our cousins the chimpanzees and other apes still survive in their piece of bush. *Homo sapiens* was most likely pushed on by his curiosity, another of his features, that is, the need to look beyond the horizon to discover the unknown.

Despite various opinions, some major queries seem to remain unsolved: where is the place of origin of *Homo sapiens*? What were the reasons for his diffusion? How did figurative art originate and why? What was the core of the conceptual heritage that *Homo sapiens* carried with his migrations out of his original homeland?

Many other questions arise from the daily fieldwork of archaeologists and anthropologists concerning the issue of the identity of *Homo sapiens*. The local features of art, material culture, social structure, typology of habitation sites or economic resources could contribute details of both general trends and the specific local varieties of human expression. Issues on evolution and variations in art styles and subject matter, the diffusion and localization of cultural patterns, and regional specific characteristics may enrich our understanding, open up new horizons of knowledge, and stimulate constructive debates.

A forthcoming issue of **EXPRESSION** will welcome articles on the many facets of the cultural identity of *Homo sapiens*. Colleagues and friends with ideas and something to say or to ask are welcome to participate and share this experience.

E. A.

## ON THE DIFFUSION OF CULTURE

An invitation to share your experience and knowledge in a forthcoming issue of **EXPRESSION** quarterly journal.

How are human abilities, concepts, and traditions born, and how do they travel and have their course? This question arises in almost every study or research in anthropology and archaeology. It may arise in every event, conversation, thought or daily habit. It may arise even when you think about your meal: how was this dish invented, where is it from? After fire was mastered, grilled meat became the most widespread dish, and did not need a plate. Food today, apart from fire or heat, requires a plate and a cooking pot. How, why, and where did

such habits become part of culture?

The first homeland of humankind is believed to be a corner of Africa. Other primates grew there as well and they are still there. Over 2 million years ago the ancestors of man had already produced the first tools to enhance the abilities of their hands, and expanded their territory, reaching Asia and Europe. How? Why? But we could also ask how and why did Magellan, Cook, Vasco da Gama, Bougainville, and others want to discover new unknown lands. More recently explorations of Antarctica were followed by the explorations of the moon, which may soon be followed by explorations of the planet Mars. Human colonies are not yet present there, but plans for colonization may come and culture may expand beyond any previously conceived limits. Looking at the past is a step to looking at the future and to understanding the spirit of man. Human colonization never stopped. High mountain ranges, regions of thick forest and faraway islands were reached and settled much before the invention of wheeled vehicles and motor boats. Islands, like Crete, have traces of human presence already over 100,000 years ago. By then seafaring had developed enough to allow the landing of entire clans on islands where they settled down for generations.

From what we know, Australia was first populated some 60,000 years ago. Some 40,000 years ago humans had crossed Beringia and were present already in five continents. How and why did this diffusion take place? In the course of a few millennia, hundreds of islands were populated in the Pacific and seafaring people introduced and developed different habits and patterns of culture. Major islands, like Greenland or Madagascar, became populated by different waves of migrants. The history of man is made of many stories, many events, many adventures, many acts of daring and courage that reveal the stunning human adventure of curiosity and inquisitiveness. They reveal your heritage, whoever you are, the identity of your ancestors: explorers, discoverers, conquerors pushed by the biggest fault and the biggest gift of our species: curiosity. The diffusion of cultures never stopped. Clamorous events like the diffusion of European culture in Australia totally changed its ethnic identity; the diffusion of Christianity in Latin America or of Islam in Asia and Africa introduced new values and changed beliefs, cult practices, behavior, concepts, and social traditions. Society and human relations were no longer the same. The diffusion of culture imposes new patterns and eliminates previous ones.

The diffusion of cultures, the colonization of new living spaces, in deserts, isolated islands, in almost inaccessible mountain ranges, the expansion of cultural patterns, the elimination of other cultural patterns, and the meeting and mingling of cultures and traditions resulted in modern humanity. This reality is made up of an infinity of adventures. Some may find space in a forthcoming issue of **EXPRESSION**. Small details may inspire big thoughts.

Culture marks the destiny of humankind. Near Eastern Neolithic peasants penetrated into Europe, an “illegal invasion of extra-communitarians”, seriously disturbing the quiet life of hunters and gatherers, that changed the ethnic identity of Europe and created a new European identity and civilization which, in the course of time, conquered the rest of the world. The spread and conquests of the Chan agricultural people suppressed pastoralists and hunters and created the Chinese identity and civilization, and the biggest nation on earth. The Roman empire suppressed barbarians, conquered people from Iberia, Gallia, North Africa, and the Near East, and created a new cultural and social pattern which was the basis of a conceptual background that favored the birth and growth of Christianity. Many other events defined the diffusion of culture. Every story, every tradition, every archaeological testimonial find is relevant. Even small events of tribal migrations, of cultural influence, are part of global history.

Queries like the when and why of Aboriginal arrivals in Australia, the diffusion of the Polynesians over hundreds of Pacific islands, the colonization and subsequent abandon of early cultural adventures in the Tassili and other areas of the Sahara Desert, the early penetration of peoples in the tropical forest of Amazonia or the Congo, the process of colonizing some tough regions like the Tibet high range or the Kalahari, the Rub el-Khali or the Gobi deserts, are significant events revealing the spirit of man. Every story, every myth, like every archaeological find, tells us a chapter of the diffusion of culture. Awareness of the past is projecting new light on the present. Sometimes, a piece of pottery, a rock painting, the introduction of a domestic animal or plant, or other relics of human action, may reveal a story of migration or of cultural diffusion. Colleagues and friends having stories, ideas, and documents to share are cordially invited to join us and propose their papers. Please consider that **EXPRESSION** is not a periodical specializing in a specific sector or area of archaeology, but a journal of conceptual anthropology, addressed to institutions and individual readers in 80 countries around the world. Make your text appeal to this kind of audience. Avoid a dry technical report. Tell your story to a world of culture.

This forthcoming issue on cultural diffusion is planned for 2020. Early proposals or drafts of texts are welcome. Do not leave it to the last minute. Details on how to present your paper are specified in any issue of **EXPRESSION** and the orientation of conceptual anthropology is expressed by the contents of the publications listed in the **CATALOGUE**:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=15jzmQfDYeYU7C-EsYLu6fVmCkhljxC1tT>

**EXPRESSION**:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1YC0eumJLA0v7-tn03u8EL2xjLArg7-C>

For additional information: atelier.etno@gmail.com

## PREHISTORIC HOMOSEXUAL PARTIES?

In issue 25 of **EXPRESSION**, the article of Luc Hermann (Belgium) on “Music and Dance in Rock Art from South-eastern Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan” has given rise to queries from readers. Several of the published figures show couples of males, in dancing postures, joining their male sexual organs. The article does not elaborate on this detail but readers questioned the meaning of this habit. Was it a homosexual erotic expression or some fertility ritual or something else? (Fig 1, a – b – c.). Others of the published images seem to show scenes of group homosexual sodomy (Fig. 2). Again more queries. It is an easy custom to define what is not understood as ritual, but of what and for what? Here it seems rather an expression of a sort of homosexual orgy. Are there similar traditions in function or in memory from the same region? These figures attributed to the Metal Ages (Bronze and Iron Ages) reveal sexual habits of people and their clearly exposed expression engraved on rocks, thus worthy of being immortalized. What are these images telling us about the habits of their makers?



Fig. 1b

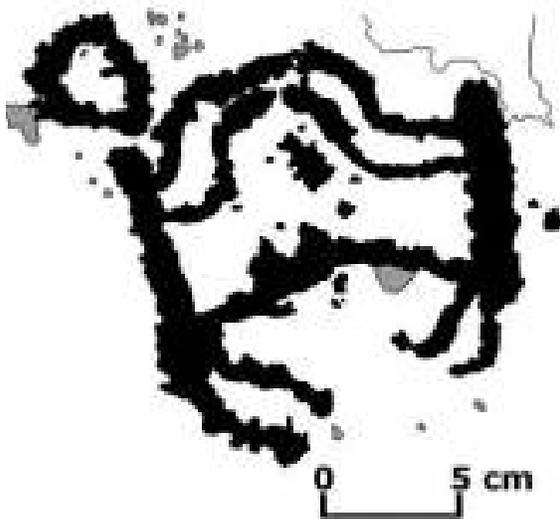


Fig. 1a



Fig. 1c

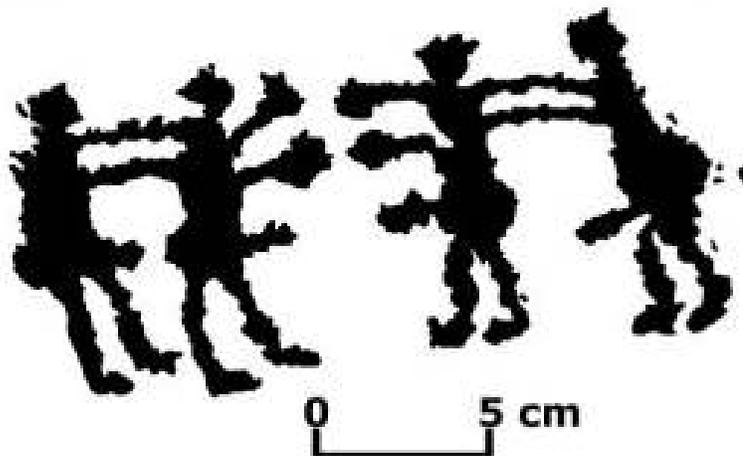


Fig. 2

## FORTHCOMING NEW DEBATES

Readers are proposing themes for debate. When at least three articles are submitted on the same theme, the topic is considered for a forthcoming issue.

- 1 - **ON THE DIFFUSION OF CULTURE.** How are human abilities, concepts, and traditions born, and how do they travel and have their course?
- 2 - **SOCIAL STRUCTURE AS REVEALED BY PREHISTORIC AND TRIBAL ART.** How pictures reveal social relations and social organization.
- 3 - **DEFINING THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF *HOMO SAPIENS*.** Art, material culture, myths, beliefs, and conceptual trends.
- 4 - **WHERE DOES HOMO SAPIENS COME FROM?** Where, how and when?
- 5 - **IS *HOMO SAPIENS* THE INVENTOR OF FIGURATIVE ART?** Is visual art the sign of his presence?
- 6 - **PERSONAL IDENTITIES OF ARTISTS.** Identifying the hands of a specific artist, school or tradition in prehistoric and tribal art.
- 7 - **BURIAL CUSTOMS AND PRACTICES** as expression of beliefs in the afterlife. How was the world of the dead conceived?
- 8 - **IMAGES OF WARFARE AND FIGHTING IN PREHISTORIC AND TRIBAL ART.** Their commemorating role and their historical value.
- 9 - **SEAFARING DEPICTIONS: RECORDING MYTHS OR EVENTS?** Considering the story of seafaring and its earliest documentation.
- 10 - **REGIONAL PATTERNS IN ARTISITIC CREATIONS.** What generates local characteristics in artistic expression?
- 11 - **THE ORIGINS OF RELIGION AND THE ORIGINS OF ART.** Possible connections.
- 12 - **VISUAL ART AS A MEANS TO EXPLORE THE HUMAN MIND.** The conceptual anthropology of prehistoric minds.
- 13 - **WHEN AND HOW PEOPLE FROM THE NEW WORLD (AMERICA AND AUSTRALIA) DISCOVERED THE PRESENCE OF THE OLD WORLD (AFRICA AND EURASIA)?** What did they know of the Old World before recorded contacts?
- 14 - **MYTHS OF ORIGINS: WHERE DID THE ANCESTORS COME FROM?** Global and local versions.
- 15 - **THE PRIMARY MYTHS AND THEIR COMMON ROOTS.** Archetypes and other widespread patterns
- 16 - **VERNACULAR DECORATIVE PATTERNS AND THEIR SOURCES.** Decoration of objects, huts or rock surfaces as the expression of identity.

## PROPOSALS FOR NEW DEBATES

Readers are proposing themes for debate. When at least three articles are submitted on the same theme, the topic is considered for a forthcoming issue.

*Proposals for papers and suggestions on these and other issues are welcome.*

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# MALE AND FEMALE VARIABILITY IN THE ROCK ART OF AZERBAIJAN

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## Prologue

On the border between Europe and Asia, Azerbaijan appears on some maps as part of Europe, on others as part of Asia. A government presentation in an official guide book of Azerbaijan is ambiguous in this respect: 'The Republic of Azerbaijan is a transcontinental contiguous presidential republic in the Caucasus region, situated at the crossroads of Eastern Europe and Western Asia.' It does not state to which continent it belongs.

Since antiquity, Azerbaijan has awakened the curiosity of travelers and historians. In classical times it was called Atropatena, 'Land of Fire', where the burning of natural petroleum and gas at the surface still creates peculiar fire choreographies (fig. 1). Ancient myths consider this area between the Caucasus Mountains, the Caspian Sea and Iran, to be the site of the biblical Garden of Eden, whence the first humans derived. Other myths consider it the land of origin of ancient Mesopotamian people. Such legends have woven a mythical background for Azerbaijan: whether or not this is the original land of the Sumerians or the Garden of Eden, there is no doubt that this country was considered to be a cradle of humanity from ancient times. Being positioned between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea, in any case it has been one of the main highways of migration between Asia and Europe since Palaeolithic times.

Traces of human presence are widespread throughout the region: the archaeological discoveries testify to thousands of years of human occupation. Azykh cave and other Palaeolithic sites left important traces of early hominids. The early agricultural societies found their way to Europe from the Middle East. From the Neolithic to the Bronze Age, the Kurgan funerary tumuli indicate Azerbaijan as part of a vast cultural province extending from the Black Sea to Central Asia. In the metal ages, the Scythian culture marked an age

of opulence and creativity, connecting Azerbaijan to the world of traders spread over vast areas of Asia and Europe.

One of the most spectacular aspects of Azerbaijan's prehistoric relics is its rock art. The greatest concentration of these rock engravings is located in the Gobustan region, between the southern outcrops of the Caucasus Mountain range and the Caspian Sea, some 60 km south of the capital Baku. This area has been one of the major and easiest transit areas between Asia and Europe since time immemorial. Thousands of rock engravings are located inside and outside rock shelters and small caves, with superimpositions allowing the reconstruction of a sequence of styles and periods spanning periods of time. They represent the archives of different populations crossing or settled in the area.<sup>1</sup>

According to the categorical analysis of conceptual anthropology, the typology of world rock art includes five major categories connected to different life styles: 1 Early Hunters; 2 Food-gatherers; 3 Late Hunters; 4 Pastoralists; and 5 Complex-food-producers. Gobustan is a rare site where all five categories are present, making this area a relevant case for the study of rock art styles, typology and conceptual analysis.<sup>2</sup> It is of particular interest for rock art studies as it displays the record of different cultures that left their art and messages in the course of millennia on the same rocks. The present paper will be concerned mainly with the phases of rock art related to hunter-gatherers, which display a meaningful sequence of different styles and a peculiar case of male and female figures alternating gender from period to period.

In 1976, the present writer analyzed the complex succession of rock art horizons of Gobustan in a book review of Djafarsade's book published in 1973 (Anati, 1976). Already at that time, Gobustan appeared to reveal an exceptional sequence of styles, displaying thematic, stylistic and conceptual elements related to both European and Middle Eastern rock art sites. The rock art of Gobustan does indeed appear as an historical archive with numerous figurative styles overlapping each other in a succession of periods and phases. In his book, Djafarsade proposed chronological suc-

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1 For a general overview see Anati (2015a).

2 For the definition of categories, see Anati (2015b).

cession was intuitive, his hypothesized succession of styles and themes being confirmed to some extent by modern recording systems and technical analyses. Djafarsade's book awakened curiosity and interest and was at the root of our intention to acquire a first-hand knowledge of the site.

In 2000 and again in 2001, we visited the area with a team which included Ariela Fradkin Anati, Alberto Giacomazzi and Marco Antonello, with the logistic coordination of Stanislav Rubenchick. The expedition, under the auspices of the Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici, was sponsored by ENI, the Italian company operating in gas extraction in Azerbaijan. It enjoyed the good cooperation of the Italian embassy in Baku and the moral support of the Azerbaijani government. The team had the privilege of being guided by Dr Faradjeva, director of the National Park and by the archaeologist Rustamov Djafargulu. Local volunteers joined the team. The results of these investigations were published in the book *Gobustan* (Anati, 2001; updated edition 2015), with the participation of D. N. Rustamov, F. Muradova and M. N. Faradjeva. Other studies appeared in sections of books (Anati, 2003a, pp. 216–29; Anati, 2003b, pp. 248–82; Anati, 2007, pp. 174–83), where all the supporting references are found.



Fig. 1. Gobustan. Permanent fires at the surface. Since early times Azerbaijan has been known as the land of fires. Photo EA 2001 XXI-3).

### Changes in Conceptual Patterns

The topography of the oriental borders of Europe, marked by the Caucasus and Ural Mountains, and by the Caspian basin, has made this area an easily accessible gateway to reach Europe from Asia in most periods. Early hominids found their way into Europe by this route. Ancestors of various European populations, including early *Homo sapiens*, may have crossed through here, finding shelter in the caves and leaving their imprint on rock surfaces.

In the Ice Age and when the retiring glaciers flooded the plains of the Volga and Don, the topography of the region was different from today. A vast lagoon connected the Caspian to the Azov Sea and the Black Sea, granting access to the open sea from a large internal sea. People used boats to cross over and such seafaring, which is depicted in the rock art, may have been the source of stories, legends and myths. Some of these figures of boats are associated with assemblages which include figures of Pleistocene fauna and may be among the oldest known representations of boats in the world.

At the opposite end of Europe, in Portugal and Spain, there are several areas of Palaeolithic open-air rock engravings. The better known are Foz Côa in Portugal and Siega Verde in Spain, which to some extent display stylistic pattern successions similar to some

of the phases of the Gobustan sequence (Anati, 1995, pp. 235–59; Anati 2014a; Varela Gomes, 2000, pp. 23–42). The Foz Côa proposed chronology has awakened a vast debate in the scientific community. We now know that the production of rock art there at the extreme west of Europe may have persisted for 30,000 years. The Gobustan sequence appears then to be a meaningful parallel, showing stylistic successions, at the extreme southeastern end of Europe, displaying both different and similar elements of style and stylistic evolution to those of Foz Côa and Siega Verde, from

one to the other geographical extreme of Europe. Some of the phases of Gobustan are rather unique and have no parallels in Iberia or elsewhere in Europe.

The rock art sequence of Azerbaijan appears to begin before that of the Iberian Peninsula and probably also of the entire western Europe. It is consistent in a succession of horizons, starting from Pleistocene hunter-gatherers, persisting in Holocene Mesolithic and Neolithic horizons, all the way to classical, medieval and recent times. The rock art of Azerbaijan represents various styles and phases of three main cultural horizons: the art of early hunter-gatherers (no use of bow and arrow), transitional phases of late hunting societies (using bow and arrow), having some domesticated animals, and the art of pastoralists and food-producing societies.

One of the most relevant aspects of the stylistic sequence of Gobustan is in the fact that they show an alternation of phases where large wild animals are dominant and other phases where anthropomorphic figures are dominant. And further, among the phases of the human figures there are alternations of phases where male figures are dominant and phases in which female figures are dominant. Some of the phases of the Early Hunters, which include figures of wild bovines over 2 m long, display stylistic analogies with western European parallels. Paradoxically, some of the Gobustan rock art shows similarities to iconographic complexes ascribed to the Solutrean culture, a material culture of stone implements, which is not recorded in Azerbaijan. The phases of the Gobustan rock art representing anthropomorphic figures do not have parallels in western European rock art, while having parallels in the mobile art of three-dimensional objects from eastern Europe.

With the beginning of food production, the Gobustan sequence acquired characteristics which are nearer to the Middle Eastern parallels. During the metal ages, the rock art displays features which are familiar to the cultures around the Black Sea, especially the Kurgan culture. Later, it acquires features typical of the Scythian cultures of Central Asia. All this may well reflect the role of Azerbaijan as a crossroads in Eurasia.

Absolute dating for the various styles and phases of Gobustan rock art is still lacking reliable documentation. Their cultural implications for the way of life, economic resources and social structure are of histor-

ical value and may be analyzed while awaiting precise dating. However, some valuable hints are present about the chronology. The changes in the faunal representations recorded in the succession of phases of rock art differentiate the Pleistocene from Holocene fauna and this is a reliable element for historical reconstruction. Thus several phases appear to belong to the Pleistocene and others to the Holocene.

Despite the abundance of comparative elements, one of the curious aspects of the sequence of Gobustan rock art is its uniqueness. Numerous sites of rock art are known in the Caucasian and Pontic area. There are also large concentrations in Armenia, Georgia and the internal zones of Azerbaijan, but all of these appear to be rather late. The horizons of Early Hunters and gatherers are so far concentrated in Gobustan: this may well indicate its fundamental role as a transit area along the migration routes of Eurasia and as a gate to Europe.

The stratigraphic sequence of the early phases of Gobustan rock art is characterized by two major stylistic typologies of hunter-gatherers: one is dominated by anthropomorphic subjects, the other by zoomorphic subjects. These stylistic and typological types alternate with each other. It may be worth considering that western European Pleistocene rock art is primarily an art representing animals, while Australian Pleistocene art mostly represents human figures. Here the two types of subjects are found in alternation. Similar typological alternation may be present in the art of hunter-gatherers of North America, although a distinct definition of styles and ages is still missing for the rock art in that region of the world.

The typological group defined by the anthropomorphic images comes first but then it reappears in a stratigraphic order above (after) phases of the animal figures. The stylistic differences between the anthropomorphic phases and the zoomorphic ones are raising queries of interpretation: the contrasting subject choices of these groups reveal different concerns and conceptual orientations. What made these people select as the focal theme of their figurative creations at a certain moment the human figure, and at another moment the animal figure? It was a total and drastic change in style, theme and concepts, which took place in the Pleistocene, while the same rock surfaces were used in the same area. Did the fauna change? Did the

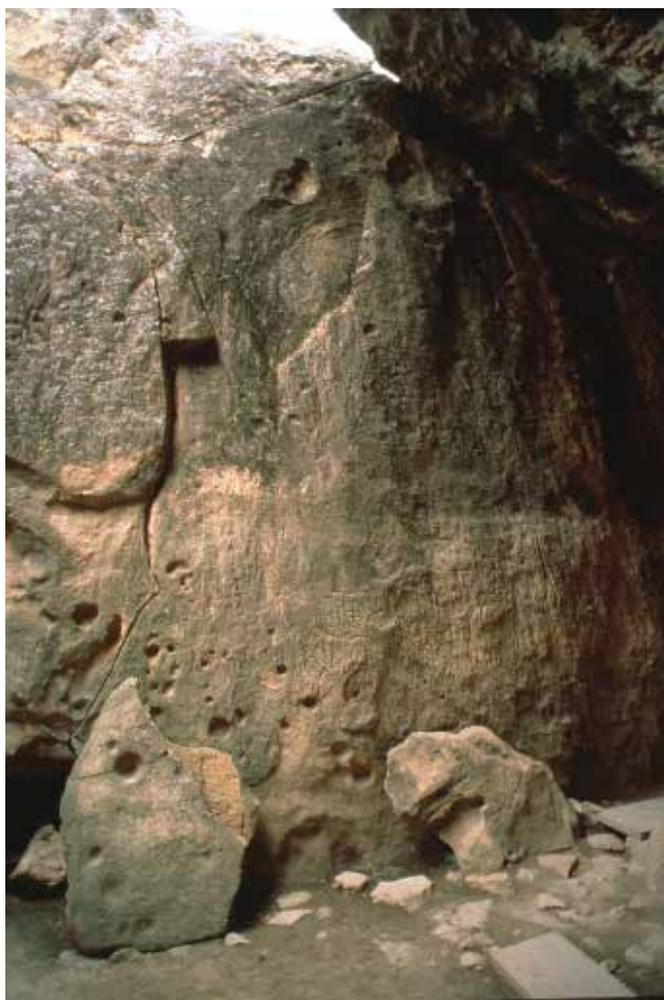


Fig. 2. Bujuk Dash, Gobustan. The most evident cultural markings of this territory are the artistic expressions engraved on the walls of rock blocks, shelters and caves. The difficulties that scholars have in attributing dates to these features can sometimes be overcome by excavating archaeological levels adjacent to the rocks. In this case the lower section of the rock wall, which has engravings belonging to the phase I/C-D, was covered by layers of a Mesolithic culture dating more than 10,000 years ago. This discovery constitutes a *terminus ante quem*: the anthropomorphs were engraved previous to the deposition of the Mesolithic layers. The upper section of the rock has engravings belonging to horizon II/A-B. (Photo EA 2000 LXVII-9).

diet change? Did the people change? But then, even more intriguing is the change of gender, in the phases of anthropomorphic images, between phases representing female figures and phases representing male figures.

To figure out the possible function of the rock art, a recurring element in Gobustan is the relation between vertical figurative engraved rocks and horizontal rock surfaces covered by cup-marks. Some of such cupules are small, others are rather large in size, look-

ing like craters or grinding containers, and may have had functional uses (fig. 2). Such an association gives the impression that they were used for some activities connected to rock art. Hypotheses like their use as offering pots, for the performance of sacrifices or the production of ritual food would require further supporting evidence.

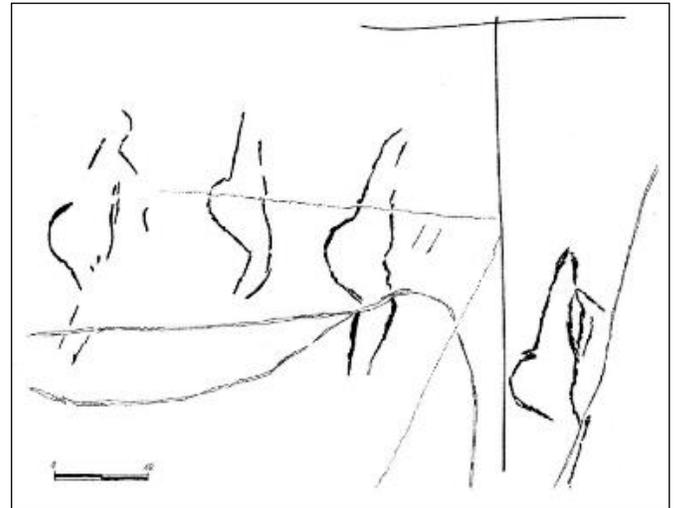
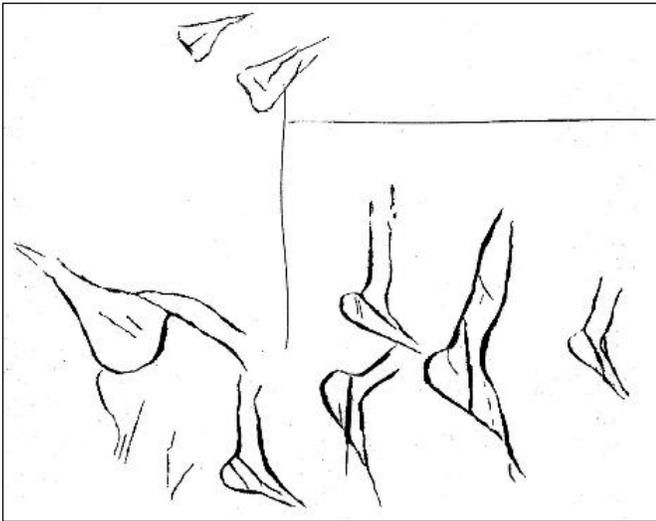
### Matrons, Patriarchs and Myths of Origin

Naked women, at times fat, at times slender, sometimes with bells around their waists, or/and men, with slim elegant bodies and short 'skirts', are usually represented in repetitive sequences, sometimes aligned, accompanied by defining objects or ideograms likely to specify their identity. Some of the male figures hold, on their shoulders an object appearing as a double stick. Often, the figures are represented in a row of several. In such a figurative assemblage, it is unlikely that they represent gods or spirits. Who are they? What was the purpose of engraving them?

From analysis of the engraved surfaces, this typological horizon of anthropomorphic figures turned out to have at least five distinct sub-phases with specific stylistic peculiarities and characters. Repetitive superimpositions, showing the same succession sequence on different rock surfaces, establish their relative chronological sequence. Technical characteristics change from phase to phase, regarding the size of the figures, the depth of the engravings, the idealization of the forms and the precision of the pecking. Every phase was executed with precise rules, following a specific mannerism in each phase.

These anthropomorphic figures, some of which are over 2 m high, more than natural size, precede the naturalistic large figures of wild Pleistocene fauna. The sub-phases represent a sequence of different styles, which likely covers a long time range and an earlier beginning. They display the following main characters.

**I/A.** Feminine figures in profile, of modest dimensions (varying from 5 cm to 25 cm. high), stylized, having emphasized traits of steatopygia and exaggerated breasts. Breasts and buttocks appear to be much more important than the face or the feet, which are often omitted. Some of these figures represent female beings, repeated over and over again. The similarity to Palaeolithic analogous figures over a vast area,



Figs. 3a, 3b, 3c

The study of prehistoric art documents the presence of constants widely diffused in time and space. These could be the consequence of acculturation processes or may reflect fundamental elements of human cognition derived from a cultural matrix common to Homo sapiens. Examples of these are the three images of the Palaeolithic Venuses found respectively in France (Les Eyzies), Egypt (Kom-Ombo) and Gobustan (Buyukdash) (fig. 30a: tracing CCSP; fig. 30b: tracing CCSP; fig. 30c: tracing CCSP).

from western Europe to Arabia and to the Nile valley, may indicate the presence of widespread conceptual contents of these images (figs. 3a, 3b, 3c). It is noteworthy that these figures are not single icons, and are frequently grouped together as a team.

Some of these female schemes on different rock surfaces are associated with figures of boats. They are inside

the boat or above, as if they were floating over it (figs. 4, 5). Some rather elaborate figures of boats appear to be as old as the female figures. One gathers the impression that these travelling women on boats tell a story, a myth or an event, which is repeatedly memorized, as a recurring topic occupying the minds of their makers. In this phase the typology of the engravings is restricted to two subjects, females and boats, and they are frequently related to each other. It is noteworthy that most of these figures are located just near the coastline of what is today the Caspian Sea. Do they memorize a story of women arriving from the sea? Is it a myth of origin? In the rock art of that stage, no doubt, the images of women occupy a dominant presence.

**I/B.** Large schematic anthropomorphic male figures in profile. Sometimes these are taller than 1 m. The subject matter has changed from female to male figures. The images are more than double in size. The prototype is a tall and powerful male figure. What is the identity of these images: leaders, ancestors, mythical spirits or divinities, or else? The shifting from the female idealized being to the male idealized being may look like some sort of revolution. An ideological change took place, moving the recurring icon and theme of concern from female to male.

**I/C.** Large human figures in frontal view. The largest are over 2 m high. They have elegant and exaggerated, stylized rounded shapes. This third phase includes both male and female anthropomorphic images. Several figures appear to be holding an object on their shoulder and this is a repetitive attribute. It appears as

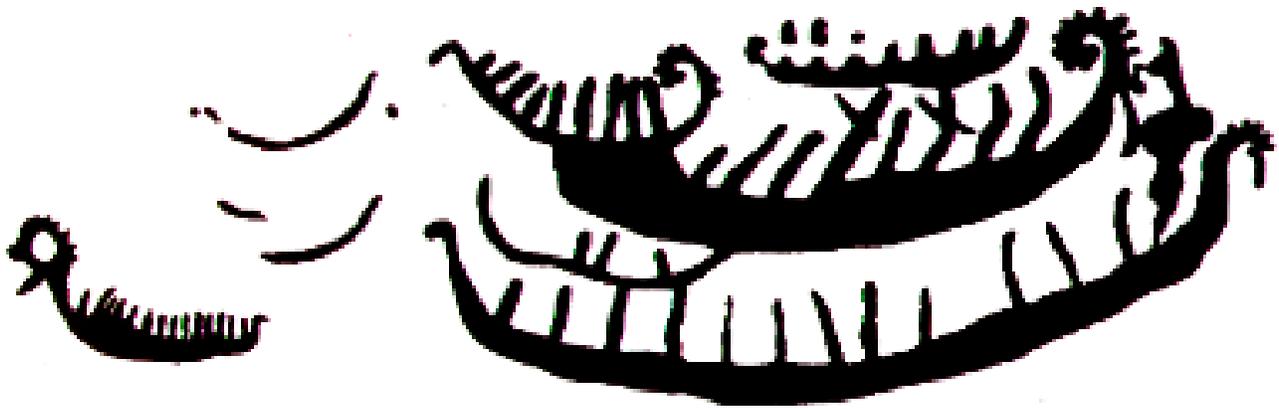
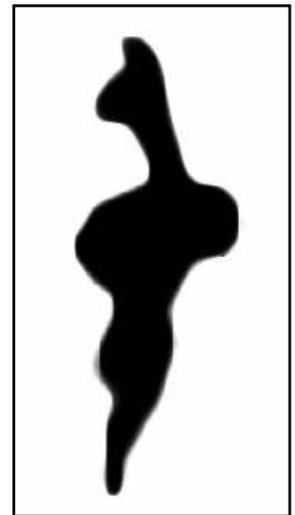


Fig. 4. Gobustan. Boats and anthropomorphic figures. (Tracing of photo to EA 2000 CLXXXI-16).



two parallel lines bowed at their ends. It may represent a meaningful object of current use. This object appears also in subsequent phases. It has been proposed that it may represent an axe-like tool, a spear propeller, a walking-stick, a throwing stick, a symbol of power. It might be an ideogram indicating the identity or the role of the holder. Comparing these figures with the stick-holders in the mobile Palaeolithic art of western Europe, a hypothesis could be that it is symbolizing travel or traveler (Anati, 2015). Whatever the case, this object is an indicator that must have been meaningful to the makers of the images (fig. 6).

Figures of boats, likely to belong to the same phase, may indicate an epic crossing of water. Some of them appear to represent large boats. If the vertical sticks represent human beings, they contained large numbers of people. Again, the images tell a story, an event or a myth of a migration or an epic journey. These people, ancestors or otherwise, were travelling on land and on water by boat, a saga about their arrival or departure. The heroes are male; in the previous phase they were females.

The boats and the anthropomorphic beings are side by side but they are of two different sizes and may represent two concepts or two elements of the tales. The anthropomorphic figures are larger and more important, they are the subject. The boats are smaller and may represent the object of the tale.

**I/D.** Human figures, mainly male, are holding bow and arrow. In this phase, arms and hands holding bow and arrow are added to previous figures. Thus, it appears that preceding images were considered incomplete without this element. The bow and arrow

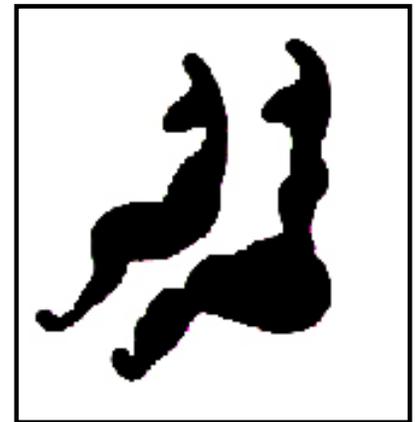
represent an important new tool and a defining attribute. Bows do not seem to have been represented in previous phases. As a working hypothesis, this phase marks the introduction of the bow and arrow as a new acquisition. These figures are more schematic, more compact, and have less precise outlines and are smaller in size than those of the previous phases. The introduction of the bow marks the introduction of a new revolutionary technological acquisition, possibly the beginning of a new age.

**I/E.** Human figures, mostly female, with decorations, tattoos or elements that may indicate clothing, body decoration or attributes. Some figures have a hermetic stylization but are elegant. In this phase, figures of boats persist near the anthropomorphic images. The same or a similar sea-crossing myth noted in the preceding phases survives.

The alternation of the prevalence of male and female images in the different phases is noteworthy. Feminine figures dominate at the beginning and at the end of



Fig. 5. Gobustan. Boats and anthropomorphic figures. (Tracing of photo EA 2000 CLXXXI-19).



this sequence, while in the middle phases, men and women are both represented, though male figures are more frequent than female ones. In one phase only male figures are present.

The quantitative variation of male and female beings depicted in the different phases raises the question of the possible meaning of such thematic changes in connection with the position of women in society in the sequence of phases. It may reveal the alternation of conceptual changes from one phase to the other and the varying role of each gender.

From the analysis of associations, figures of boats appear to be associated with the human figures throughout the sequence, from the beginning. Such associations, as mentioned, may illustrate the recurring motif of a story or a myth concerning seafaring, ancestors, spirits or others crossing water by boat. Sometimes the anthropomorphic beings are associated with the boats in scenes or compositions. In other phases, they are represented as ideograms in sequence, having different proportions, the anthropomorphic figure having a larger size.

Human figures of these various phases appear to be a long succession of styles covering several periods and perhaps ages, though having a conceptual continuity. Throughout this sequence, anthropomorphic figures are the dominant subjects and, along with boats, they seem to illustrate the story of a sea-crossing

Comparative analysis of style and typology are consistent in providing chronological hints: they show an extraordinary multi-millenary persistence of the theme

of feminine figures, fat and steatopygic, or slim and stylized, a sort of primordial mother, who accompanies humanity throughout the ages. The oldest phases display similarities to Upper Palaeolithic anthropomorphic figures both in Asia and Europe, in particular with the so-called Venuses attributed to early phases of the Upper Palaeolithic, some of which are over 30,000 years old (Abramova, 1990).

The variation of the successive phases between female and male figures may represent changes in the original story, giving more weight to female or to male primordial mythic heroes. As already mentioned, it may also indicate conceptual changes in the social structure, the shifting of roles and the relative importance of male and female members of society.

The entire sequence of the anthropomorphic styles may have persisted from the Pleistocene into the Holocene. In previous publications, we have considered several similar stylistic features from other regions of

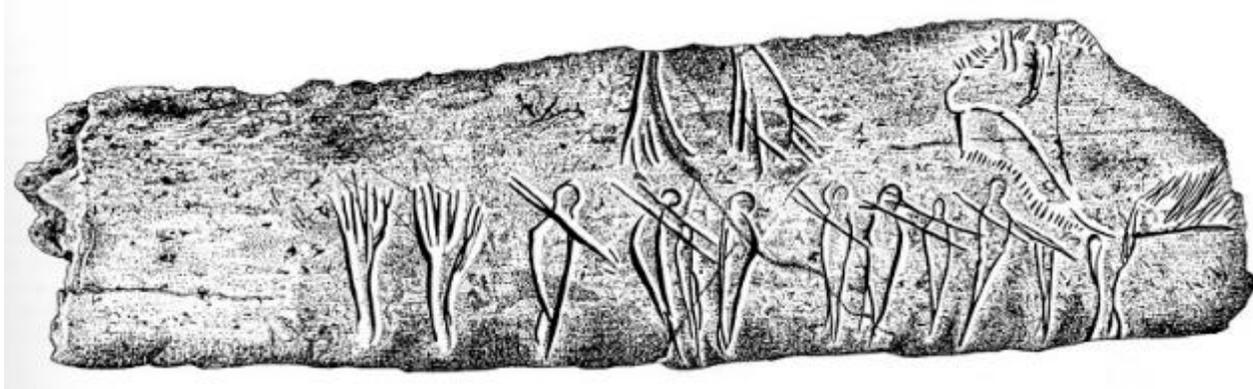


Fig. 6. Les Eyzies, Dordogne, France. A fragment of decorated bone from the Magdalenian period of the Upper Palaeolithic. A group of eight anthropomorphs in profile are marked by ideograms of the forked bâtonnet. On the right side there is a bison in profile and on the top and the left side are two double signs with tree-, limb- or fire-like forms. There are many tentative interpretations of this composition: some authors propose that it could describe a migration, of people who identified themselves with “fire marks”, from a region marked with this ideogram, to the “land of the bison”. This interpretation is suggestive because Azerbaijan, since the beginning of written history, has been known as the land of fire, where petroleum and gas deposits create fire choreographies. The land of the bison could be identified with the Franco-Cantabrian area, where this fragment was found, which during that period was rich in bison (drawing in E. Anati, 2001).

both rock art and mobile art, to compare cultural and chronological possible parallels.<sup>3</sup>

These comparisons do not necessarily indicate direct relationships with each other, neither may they necessarily have a chronological significance, they are artistic expressions of human groups in similar cultural patterns and are widely distributed in space and time. Style and subject matter reflect concepts and state of mind, which in turn refer to life style. Similar art styles may hint at similar life styles, or similar cultural and conceptual horizons, not necessarily a similar date.

In some instances, such images seem to glorify mythical beings, patriarchs and matrons, likely to be connected to tribal traditions. The conceptual matrix of myths of origin in relation to an exodus is an archetype widespread throughout the continents (Anati, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> The latest phases of this horizon display similarities to images with anthropomorphic engravings in Totes Gebirge, Austria (Anati, 1979, p. 148–9), and with frescoes at Çatal Hüyük, in Anatolia, which are attributed to the proto-Neolithic and early Neolithic (Mellaart, 1967, figs. 56, 61, 62; table XIII) and are dated, by uncalibrated C14, to 6,200–5,800 BC. Such similarities may imply conceptual parallels, though they may not necessarily indicate parallel dating. The similarity of some of the late tattooed female figures to the pottery idols of the Cucuteni culture in the Balkans may contribute to the decoding of the meaning of such decorations. Some figures seem to show peculiar patterns typical of the third horizon of Anatolian rock art (Anati, 1972a, p. 46). Similarities are also found in the rock art of the Arabian Peninsula in the early hunting and pastoral period (Anati, 1972b, p. 46; 1974, p. 157). Similar concepts of the figure and of composition may also be found in more distant localities such as in the rock paintings of the Spanish Levant (Beltrán, 1968, pp. 41ff.), or in different dimensions and associations, in Upper Egypt, in the group called Early Oasis Dwellers (Winkler, 1939, pp. 27–30).

The oldest images of this sequence may be as old as other early European phases of Upper Palaeolithic art. The primary model refers to early hunter-gatherers, persisting through the evolved hunter-gatherer phase, until the beginning of a food-producing economy, when hunting and gathering continued to play a role in the economic strategies of these groups. The later figures of decorated or tattooed bodies show conceptual and typological analogies with Neolithic rock art and clay figurines (Anati, 2015a, tav. 1).

An aspect of major interest concerns the figures of boats, rather big boats, appearing from the very beginning of the rock art sequence. These images are related to a story of travel by boat. Seafaring is likely to be one of the notable abilities of Homo sapiens and to have been performed even earlier by pre-sapiens hominids. It was practiced by Neanderthal man (Anati, 2014b) and well before, if, as it seems, humans crossed the Straits of Gibraltar 1 million years ago and reached the island of Crete well over 100,000 years ago. It is noteworthy to see here figures showing what early boats looked like. Some of the figures of the boats of Gobustan may be among the oldest figures of boats known so far and some of them represent rather large vessels. Another element of interest is the sudden appearance of the bow and arrow at a certain phase of the sequence. When did the bow and arrow become a tool of current use in Azerbaijan? As a working hypothesis we consider that it may have happened towards the end of the Pleistocene, between 15,000 and 12,000

years ago. A precise dating is a legitimate curiosity but it is not relevant in establishing the sequence of events. The bow and arrow came into use during the period in which the rock art illustrates economies of hunter-gatherers, preceding the development of a pastoral and agrarian economy.

This first horizon in the sequence of Gobustan rock art is enigmatic also because of its peculiar stylistic and thematic characteristics. It constitutes a new chapter in the study of rock art as well as in the history of art. It may turn out to be a conceptual prototype, core of other types of prehistoric art, both mobile and parietal. The hypothesis that there might be conceptual and chronological relations with the so-called Palaeolithic Venuses awakens queries on both the meaning and purpose of the images and the possible dynamics of these associations.

The conceptual background is that of stories on ancestors, possibly myths of origin, related to seafaring by boats. The shifting from female to male beings is a particularly interesting factor that may reflect changes in the social and economic role of women in society and hint at changes in economic resources and organization.

According to the stratigraphic sequence, the horizon characterized by large animal figures may fit in between the anthropomorphic phases of this horizon.

### Hunters' game

Animal figures of large dimensions, deeply engraved with contour lines, are the main subject of the other typological horizon. Such figures contrast both typologically and conceptually with the previously described horizon dominated by anthropomorphic figures. Some of these animal images are over 2 m long. All of the depicted animals are wild, the main species being bovines and equines; in later phases caprines increase numerically. Finally, both bovines and equines disappear and the represented fauna are mainly composed of caprines and cervines. The bovine represented is the auroch, a large wild bovine hunted in the Pleistocene, both in Europe and Asia.

Three stylistic groups appear to be in a chronological sequence and have each one of these three species as numerically dominant. The wild bovines are the large majority in the older group, the equines in the middle group and the caprines in the late group. It is noteworthy that each group has a different average size of figure. Bovines are the majority in the large-sized group, equines in the middle-sized group and caprines in the group with smaller figures.

Along with the faunal changes, the figurative approach of the depictions has also undergone modifications of progressive schematization. No domestic animals are represented. The three mentioned groups focus on the

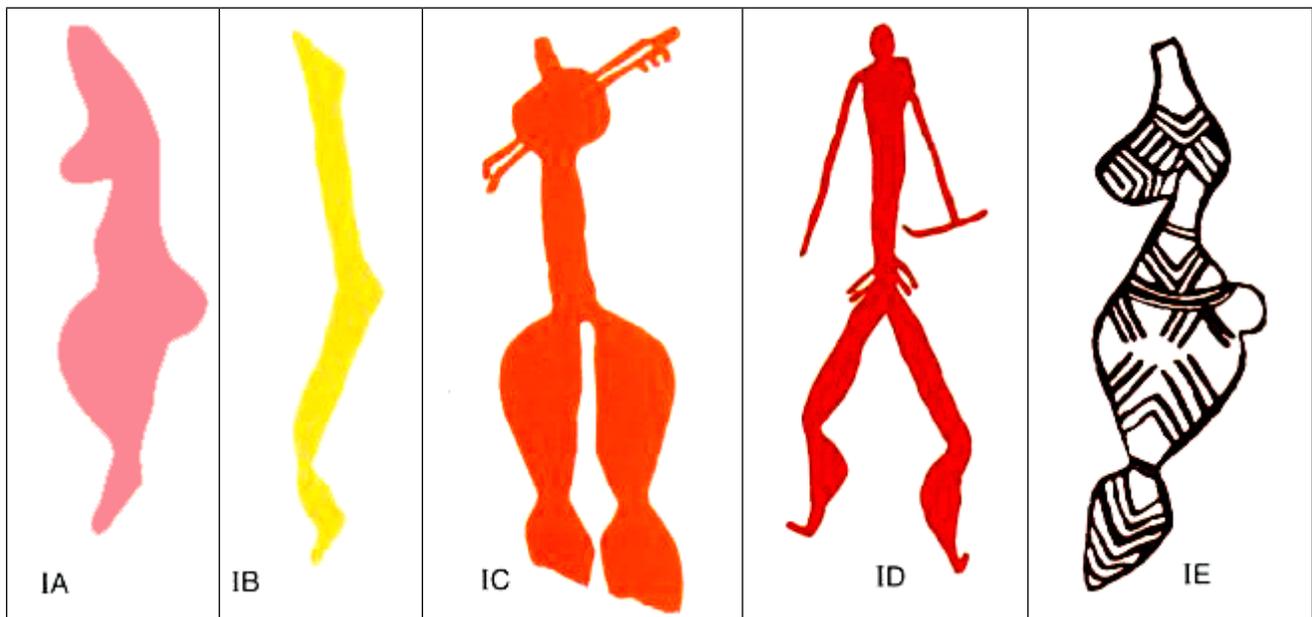


Fig. 7. The evolution of anthropomorphic representations, indicating the different phases of horizon I of Gobustan (drawings by CCSP; WARA).

depiction of game and the entire horizon appears to be related to populations of Early Hunters. There are no real scenes of hunting or of other themes, just associations and groups of figures. Later Gobustan rock art, of late hunters, pastoral and agricultural peoples, described in Anati (2015a), are beyond the scope of the present paper. Later phases continue to represent caprines as the dominant animal and the associative syntax includes real descriptive and anecdotal scenes of hunting, fighting and other themes of life which are absent in the art of Early Hunters.

From an overall examination of the stratigraphic sequence, the three phases of the animal horizon are intercalated by late phases of the horizon, characterized by anthropomorphic figures. In other words, the sequence of Gobustan rock art presents the interesting case of phases of anthropomorphic figures and phases of zoomorphic figures alternating in succession. If, as it seems, style and subject matter are the expression of a way of thinking and a way of life, such succession must have a meaning.<sup>4</sup>

The addition of hunting scenes reusing the same animal figures is the expression of an important conceptual change: while the previous phases illustrate a universal view and a generalized approach to existential problems, the scene describes specific moments and events and represents a new mentality, which the modern world inherited. The presence of scenes implies a new type of logic and mental process, which is evidently different from those of earlier, likely metaphorical, associations. The Evolved Hunters' artistic expressions find parallels over a vast area from Karelia to Siberia and beyond (Savvateiev, 1970; Okladnikov and Zaporozskaia, 1979), to the Negev Desert and to Arabia (Anati, 1999).

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<sup>4</sup> While horizon II/A illustrates, as mentioned, what may be defined as a fully Palaeolithic conception, characterized by associations of animals, and showing stylistic analogies similar to groups of western Europe, horizon II/B can be defined as sub-naturalistic, finding parallels in the Epi-Palaeolithic rock art of Anatolia (Anati, 1972a, pp. 45–6) and the alpine area (Anati, 1974, pp. 59–84). In Arabia a similar style is present among the groups defined as Early Hunters (Anati, 1972b, pp. 158–60). It finds analogies at Kilwa, in northern Saudi Arabia, in the earliest assemblage at this site defined as style I (Rothert, 1938, pp. 161–91; Anati, 1963, pp. 205–12). As mentioned already, this style is broadly represented in Siberia and Okladnikov suggests that it may go back to the Upper Palaeolithic (Okladnikov and Zaporozskaia 1970, p. 102). The similarities of the outlined animal engravings to the painted outlined figures of the Kapova cave in the Urals could have some chronological significance which is yet to be confirmed (Bader, 1965, table VII).

From this preliminary analysis we may consider that the two horizons intercalated. The chronological sequence appears to developing as follows: I/A, B, C; II/A; I/D, II/B, I/E, II/C.

The fluctuation of horizons between those with prevailing anthropomorphic figures and those characterized by zoomorphic figures, raises a major query for the comprehension of the artists' concerns and concepts. The sometimes advocated idea that animal depictions may be the production of male hunters and human depictions the work of women is open to debate. If such were the case, we might have to conclude that the production of rock art alternated from periods of male production to those of female production, a rather unlikely hypothesis.

From analyses of other regions where such alternation of prevailing images was recorded, in the rock art of Tanzania (Anati, 1986) and elsewhere, a far-reaching hypothesis emerged (Anati, 2010). It appears that these two figurative approaches may reflect two different kinds of economy and diet. The alternation of prevailing zoomorphic and anthropomorphic themes has been considered in central Tanzania, the Tassili and other oases of the Sahara in North Africa, the Kimberley, in western Australia, the Pecos region of Texas and Mexico, and Baja California, Mexico (Anati, 2003). The animal styles appear to be expressions of a society of hunters having a prevailing carnivorous diet, while the anthropomorphic styles are considered to be primarily related to food-gatherers having a prevailing vegetal diet (Anati, 2010).

The sequence described a range of periods in the same region, and changes in art style and subject matter are unlikely to be purely casual. Do they represent different populations or different stages of the same population? The succession of the different phases covers a span of millennia. During a rather long period, the makers of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures alternated their markings on the same rock surfaces. The succession of phases illustrates changes in the depicted fauna, thus suggesting also climatic changes. The alternation of human groups having different styles and focusing on either anthropomorphic or zoomorphic subjects requires the decoding of their cultural and social meaning.

The earliest rock art horizon detected is characterized by female steatopygic figures, which are the first

graphic expression of large proportions, showing a similar mentality to that of the creators of the Palaeolithic so-called Venuses statuettes of Eurasia. These are the earliest known parietal images of the hypothetical primordial matrons. The succession of the phases focusing on the anthropomorphic figures and those with zoomorphic depictions may indicate variation in the way of life and likely the diet. But a major puzzle remains unsolved: The alternation of phases where female figures or male figures were dominant certainly indicates a change in the role of the conceptually dominant gender: what caused the alternation of phases dominated by female figures and those by male figures? To what extent do they indicate variations in the role of women in society?

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## GENDER IN PREHISTORIC ROCK ART: THE CASE OF SERIDÓ, BRAZIL

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### Introduction

It is not difficult to find archaeological sites with rock art in which anthropomorphic pictures are a common form of representation. However, these pictures do not always present indications likely to be understood as representations of genitals. When there are other figurative elements associated with such anthropomorphics, for instance, adornments, it is possible to suggest hypothetical interpretations of gender, especially when such elements have typical patterns of combination and are recurrent in more than one site. The archaeological context of Seridó, located between the states of Rio Grande do Norte and Paraíba, in northeastern Brazil, presents archaeological sites with rock paintings, mostly anthropomorphic, measuring 5–15 cm. The way the figures are done suggests great gestures, movement, and grouping. Thus, it is possible

to highlight a narrative character in the figures within a pattern reproduced in various places. In the midst of this set of forms we wonder whether it is possible to infer gender, and if so, whether such information fits in with what we would interpret on the basis on our own communication systems.

Before moving on to the discussion, it should be noted that the archaeological site Pedra do Alexandre, situated within the archaeological context of Seridó, has a chronology around 9,400–2,620 years, related to various human burials (Martin, 1996: 46). It is not possible to provide direct dating to prehistoric rock art observed in such a context. However, a study of the pigments used in rock paintings, as well as those used to paint the bones of secondary burials, through microchemical methods, absorption spectrometer, X-ray and electronic microwave permitted the relation of the paintings to the bone remains. In this case, dyes placed on the archaeological layers and burials indicate a marked use over a period of 5,000–4,000 years ago. This dating could correspond to that of the paintings (Martin, 2005: 113).

The study of sexual character in the anthropomorphic pictures of Seridó has already been presented (Martin 1984, 1996, 2005; Vidal 1996). Thus, we focus the



Fig. 1. Xique-Xique II site. Representation of mating and sex organs. Here there is no gender represented. Source: Santiago Guimarães.



Fig. 2. Xique-Xique II site. Representation of mating and sex organs. Here there is no gender represented. Source: Santiago Guimarães.

present discussion only on the possibility of identifying something consistent with gender, specifically the feminine, paying attention to the relationship built by Lacan (1956–1957) on body adornments.

### **Genre in rock art: what the anthropomorphics in Seridó “say”**

Gender by itself seems to be a difficult category of analysis. Starting with the term itself, there is not always a clear translation into many languages, such as French (Piscitelli 2009), which reveals the care that must be taken in its eventual use. It must be thought differently from the sexual biological concept, which is of a classificatory sort (De Laurentis 1994: 210), because its meaning has an essentially historical character. This understanding gives to genus the feature of a “social reality construction” (Conkey and Gero, 1997), a concept engendered by feminist critique of the dichotomization presented by biology.

For Joan Scott (1995), genre should rather satisfy an analytical category, than a purely historically guided concept located within traditional social science frames of reference, because occasionally these sciences use it as generalized reductive explanations. As an

analytical category, gender is somewhat dynamic and not established within a fixed dichotomy, which creates and highlights inequalities when opposing male/female or female/male. Instead, this category seems to be indicative of habits that change over time according to the importance they acquire in the sociocultural processes that come into existence at any given time. Thus, gender would be both “a constitutive element of social relations based on perceived differences between the sexes” and “a primary way of giving meaning to power relations” (Scott, 1995).

Our subject is to identify a possible representation of gender in the rock art of Seridó. However, there is not ethnic information directly related to the prehistoric context of their authors. Therefore, it is primarily necessary to refocus our target to representations of biological sexes. The visual traits used to identify sex are only those that clearly define if the represented figure corresponds to a male or a female in the representation of the genitals. This is a problem, since almost all anthropomorphic figures do not have the sex clearly represented.

The semiotic complexity of meanings capable of being attributed to Seridó figures is a great barrier to finding

reasons for why sex is almost not represented. Maybe it has been due to the equalization of social roles between men and women in the group of their authors, or that there was no intention in this kind of representation, or even there has been a rigid hierarchical basis in their sociocultural structure. Regardless of interpretive bias, sex was not important enough to be shown, as if there was no concern in identifying who was who, but only that humans in the same group lived without distinctions.

However, there is a small group of figures that present a vertical line in the central region of the body, which may be associated with the representation of the penis, and others that have two small parallel lines, also similar to a half-moon, that start around the area of the hips and may be related to the representation of the vulva. These figures appear usually associated, forming mating representations (figs. 1, 2 and 3). It is like a dichotomous structure in which the existence of one part implies the existence of the other. The recognition of sexes represented in these pictures allows

us to move on to an analysis that considers other elements associated with male and female. The main one of these elements is adornments.

The representation of anthropomorphic figures is with adornments in Seridó rock painting, and consequently, its respective indication of gender allows us to contrast ideas related to some psychoanalytical function, eventually the use of clothes. Under such a bias, the clothes would serve a woman covering the absence of something. For Lacan:

“Les vêtements ne sont pas seulement faits pour cacher ce qu'on en a, au sens d'« *en avoir ou pas* », mais aussi précisément ce qu'on n'en a pas. L'une et l'autre fonction sont essentielles. Il ne s'agit pas essentiellement et toujours de cacher l'objet mais aussi bien *de cacher le manque d'objet*” (1956–1957: 128–Leçon 10).

In other words, the clothes would exist both to hide the object as well as the absence of object. Lacan refers to the absence of the object as a *phallus*, that, in the case of a symbolic dialectic of the feminine, is an ob-

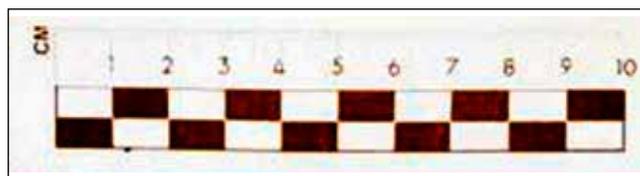


Fig. 3. Furna do Messias site. Representation of mating and sex organs. Here there is no gender represented. Source: Santiago Guimarães.



Fig. 4. Xique-Xique IV site. Representation of family group: anthropomorphic figures and the respective adornments related to gender. Source: Santiago Guimarães; tracing by É. Anati.

ject of fetishism. It is a quite logical relation not based on the function of protection, but in specifying gender. But would it be possible to notice this symbolic relation in other sociocultural circumstances?

Regarding the anthropomorphics represented in the rock art of Seridó such questioning is relevant for two reasons: because the vast majority of pictures do not present sex and because, when some of them appear dressed with corporal adornments, they present sex. However, in this case, the sex represented is the feminine, that is, just the opposite of what should be shown, according to the psychoanalytic idea. In fact, we can notice that instead of being used for hiding, the adornment is sometimes used to emphasize the representation of the vulva (figs. 4 and 5).

It is possible to conceive dress adornment as a specific indicator of the female gender. They were not observed in any form associated with the male. There is also a case in the Furna do Messias site (fig. 6), in which the anthropomorphic with adornment has a bulge in the abdomen associated with the representation of preg-

nancy, which reiterates this type of adornment as an indicator solely of the female gender (fig. 6).

Considering the representation of dress as an indicator of the female gender implies the possibility of inferring the gender of figures that do not use such adornment. In this case its absence may be related to the male gender. The existence and absence of adornments in anthropomorphic pictures occur at the same time in pictures called “family groups” (Vidal, 1996: 144). These compositions follow a basic structural pattern of two similar, paired anthropomorphics and a smaller third located between these two. One of the anthropomorphics usually has an adornment, while the other does not (figs. 4 and 7).

In another composition of figures (fig. 8, Casa Santa) there are elements that may be related to sex, or more precisely, to the moment preceding it. Rigorous use of the painting technique shows that the finely crafted strokes were not made at random. The intent in the message is expressly illustrated through the gesture of two anthropomorphics that appear to surround a hu-

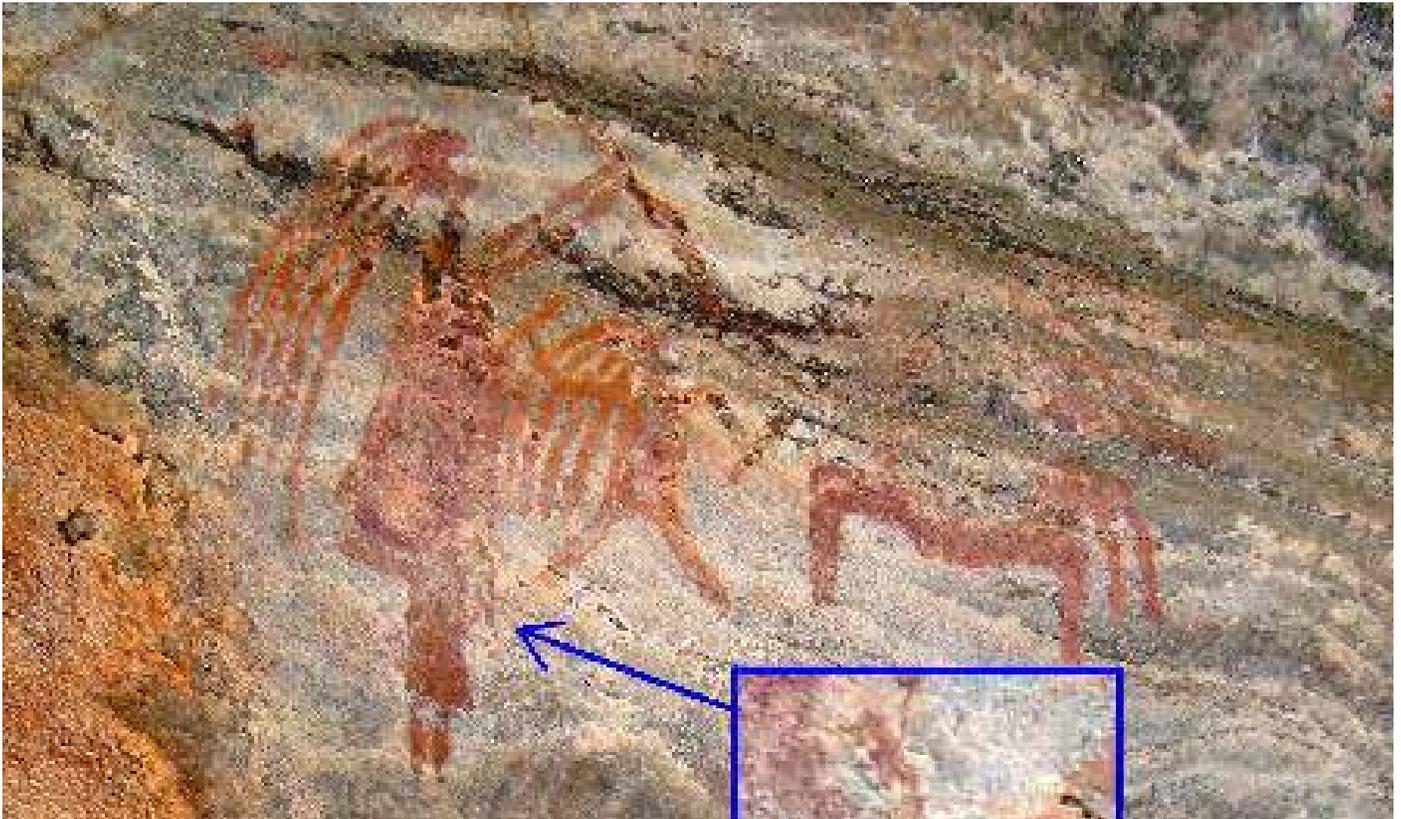


Fig. 5. Xique-Xique II site. Representation of vulva associated with specific adornment for the feminine gender. Source: Santiago Guimarães.

man who clearly has a signal of retreat, visualized by outstretched arms and repelling hands. This receding figure has an adornment in the hips, while the other two surrounding it do not show this or any other similar garment. Instead, it is possible to find in one of them the indication of the male genital organ, while the other, lacking sex representation, seems to show a preliminary act that could lead to an act of group sex. In one of the representations of the Xique-Xique IV archaeological site (fig. 9), several humans appear to be performing activities that may be related to dance, in which couples engage in a rhythmic fashion. One of the groups in the center of the figure is clearly composed of a male, a dressed anthropomorphic, and a child. The dressed anthropomorphic does not have its sex represented, like other humans similarly dressed around him. Both this adornment, as well as that verified in the Casa Santa, are similar. Instead of two forward-pointed ends, these dresses feature multiple ends all around their contours. It is like a sign of sign extension, or perhaps even a stylistic evolution. Finally, a composition of a familiar group, where both large anthropomorphics are dressed, one with two lines in

front (representation of the vulva), and the other with several ends in its outline (fig. 10).

### Conclusion

The small number of anthropomorphic figures with sex represented in the rock art of Seridó does not support any idea about the meaning of the gender. However, in the figures in which the sex is represented, there is a possibility of interpretation related to gender, exclusively from elements working as an extension of the body, the adornments. I argue that the representation of dress is an indicative element in keeping with female gender. This may contradict contemporary interpretations of the role of clothing for women, which is, in other words, to conceal the absence of the male genital organ.

The present analysis was held considering the semiotic limits that make it difficult to access the meaning of

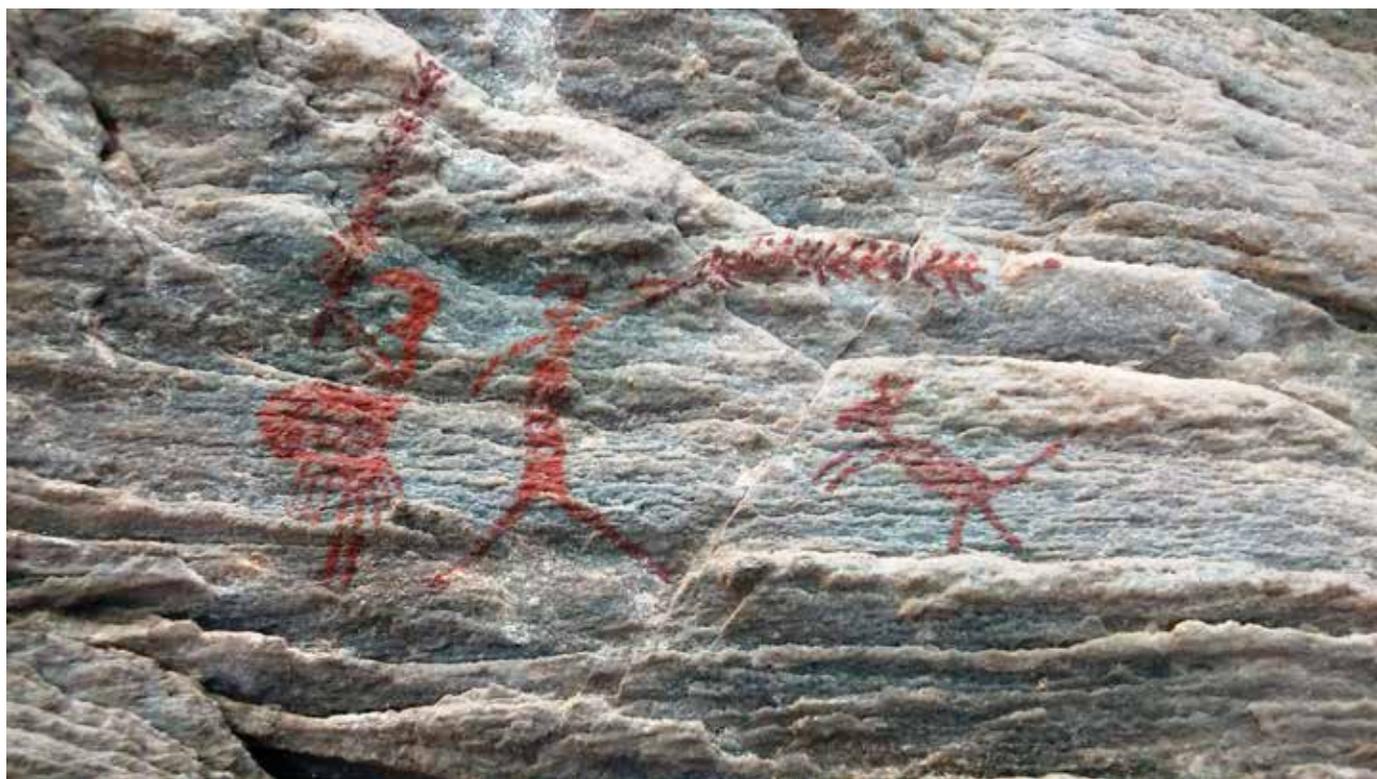


Fig. 6. Furna do Messias site. Anthropomorphic figure with a bulge in the abdomen, associated with the representation of pregnancy. The adornment is an indicator for the female gender. Source: José Dantas; tracing by E. Anati.



Fig. 7. Xique-Xique I site. Representation of family group: anthropomorphic figures and the respective adornments related to gender. Colors manipulated by Photoshop. Shades of red selected from the original picture. Source: Santiago Guimarães; tracing by E. Anati.

the visual sign. Thus, alternatively, we start from the arrangement of signifier forms as a way of raising hypotheses about the organization of the mental structure of groups we do not know more about.

Margaret Mead's classic ethnographic work (Mead, 2001, first edition 1935) on gender constructions in

the Arapesh, Mundugumor Tchambuli of New Guinea, served to illustrate how gender roles differ across cultures. That is, how our inferences about sexual representations provided by other ethnic groups may just be a distorted rereading of what they really mean. Anyway, this is a broad subject that deserves further



Fig. 8. Casa Santa site. Composition formalized by a dichotomous structure. Anthropomorphic figure with representation of male organ and anthropomorphic with female adornment. Picture manipulated by Photoshop, shades of red and dark-yellow pixels selected from the original picture. Source: Santiago Guimarães; tracing by E. Anati.



Fig. 9. Xique-Xique IV site. Group of three anthropomorphic figures, among others. The composition represents a male, an anthropomorphic with feminine dress, and a child. Source: Santiago Guimarães.



Fig. 10. Xique-Xique II site. Representation of family group. In this case, both bigger anthropomorphics are dressed, but in one of them there are two lines under the belly (representation of the vulva), and the other shows several ends in its outline. Source: Santiago Guimarães.

investigation from various fields such as psychoanalysis, anthropology, and semiotics, as there are several convergent as well as divergent perspectives that make its understanding possible.

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## FEMALE REPRESENTATIONS IN ROCK ART SCENES, SÃO RAIMUNDO NONATO-PI, BRAZIL

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### **Introduction**

Agriculture and urban life led to imbalances in social relations. As Vere Gordon Childe (1950) argued long ago, they brought with them class exploitation, social hierarchy and patriarchal relations. However, in the millions of years before, when hominids and humans lived as hunter-gatherers (Gurven and Hill 2009) or scavengers (Shipman 1986), there are grounds to believe that social relations were cooperative, within society and beyond (Ingold 2009). This paper suggests that this is so, from the study of Brazilian rock art. Furthermore, this study also fosters egalitarian scholarly relations, so that a diversity of standpoints, gen-

ders, and regions of the world may contribute to the scholarly debate (Funari 2009).

For many years, scientific research, especially archaeological research, has been taking place in São Raimundo Nonato in the state of Piauí, Brazil. Surveys began in the municipality, thanks to the residents' concern to understand what the rock scenes in the surrounding rocks meant. They had known about them for a long time, but it was only in the 1960s that these traces reached specialists. These were the archaeologists of the Museu Paulista, located in the Ipiranga neighborhood, in the city of São Paulo, also known by local people as the Museu do Ipiranga. One of them was the archaeologist Niède Guidon. She was the first specialist to take note of the remains of Saint Raimundo Nonato-PI, Brazil.

From the very beginning, Guidon was interested in getting to know the region and its archaeological monuments, the cave paintings, which would become objects of her doctoral thesis and teaching, and she presented in an enormous number of scholarly articles. The southwest region of Piauí was also the subject of field research, scientific articles, and dissertations, with many other works developed by more than a hundred researchers who have already passed through the Parque Nacional Serra da Capivara-PARNA.

The rock paintings of the southwest of Piauí revealed themselves, and were recognized and presented to the scientific scholarly community. There was a long history before 1500 in the region. This way, the archaeolog-



Fig. 1. Toca do Baixão da Vaca, Serra da Capivara, Parque Nacional Serra da Capivara– I. Pregnant woman. Source: Authors' collection, 2017.

ical sites produced a lot of material, for study in greater depth. The local population knew some of them. Due to the number of sites and ancestral remains, surveys and excavations were necessary in many of these sites.

### **Development**

Considering all this, one might ask why to turn to women in prehistoric context. We will try to answer it with arguments grounded on the proposal of Yvonne Dias Avelino, who is searching for daily life. She ponders that such a series is key and scholars must search for them. It is like the cave paintings that make up a series and have one series inside another. Series may appear in rock traditions and their subtraditions of paintings.

As mentioned above, we chose to present the cave paintings with anthropomorphic scenes of women and their cultural interpretations. Why present the feminine in the rock scenes? Because it is a way of presenting and awakening in our eyes another historical context. We may observe ways of life that are alternative to those we know and conceive of for relations between genders, and thus incorporate the criticisms made throughout the history of women and their movement with a view to improving relations between genders, at least in our view.

Another reason to address the question of female representation in rock scenes is to fight for the rights of the excluded (such as women, blacks, homosexuals, and among the various sexual choices and options, the rights of those with disabilities and others). This is a struggle for more than democracy. It is also to fight for more in-depth and broader commitments in the name of greater equality of rights.

The struggles for women's rights in the feminist movement have also contributed to greater recognition and a better understanding that there may positive outcomes in relationships based on mutual support. As we consider it, support between men and women should have been thousands of years ago. Support for this research has its origins in ancestral memories. Studying and struggling for better conditions for women in society and in the world today has to do with a re-examination of their roles in all walks of life, allowing for a review of the presumably patriarchal assumptions that are still in the world today in many places. In this way, a considerable part of the world population

looms in social obscurity. It would be necessary to review research results that show a distorted reality of the truth, in which women did not have proper social participation among the ancestral groups. Presenting the scenes of women in cave paintings is like rescuing another form of social life more than 10,000 years ago, in which people, men and women, lived another routine that seems to us more egalitarian in routines and common chores. Our imagination and the inventiveness of the first inhabitants of the land of Brazil are impregnated and employed in these images .

One motive is to explore that women were and still are holders of knowledge and knowledge that men in fact do not have and/or do not have as well, in particular, social knowledge about socio-cultural relations. How striking it is that the Daribi, a Papua New Guinea ethnic group, they tell us that women are the cooks of husbands. Among single people, each one has to give way so as not to go hungry. This fact is not machismo, it is on the contrary a demonstration of total dependence on men for the knowledge and knowledge accumulated for millennia by women that need to be recognized and appreciated. After this digression about the history and archaeology of the cave paintings, we present the discussion of how the feminine appears with the women in some of the rock scenes of the region.

Women members of the primitive bands probably played a crucial role in the formation and development of ancestral knowledge. They worked among themselves and with men and did it for the benefit of all. They divided the results of the work on an equal basis. In the rock paintings of the Parque Nacional Serra da Capivara, there are rock scenes of women who appear to be pregnant, in positions of birth, seeming to be breastfeeding or in sex relations. There are also scenes of dances that refer to the co-participation of women together with men, since the dance scenes, for the most part, do not present the genitals of the participants. There are still ethnological clues that some scenes of human dancing are representations of indigenous women in rituals or ceremonies, as still is the case today (see fig. 1).

However, these women never got proper value, so much so that they scarcely appear in the cave paintings of São Raimundo Nonato. In the scenes of birth and sex, however, the images convey feelings of respect



Fig. 2. Toca da Chapada dos Cruz, birth scene (Serra da Capivara).

and fear. In addition, it is necessary to remember that it is not always possible to determine the genre of the figures, because often the genitals were not painted, as already mentioned above (see fig. 2).

Because they have the maternal responsibility, women, contrary to what sometimes appears, had power and prestige in primitive communities. Motherhood was not a moment of suffering or symbolizing the inferiority of the gender. They played an important role within primitive societies, preventing sociocultural or economic tyranny within groups.

Carleton Coon listed women's specific tasks, such as cooking, keeping the family warm, producing fibers for making baskets, curing illnesses, relieving pain, and using charcoal. There are still countless chores done by women registered in human history. Some of the matters described by Jean Auel in his works dealing with the prehistory of Europe apply also to Brazilian lands. Still, we believe that the role of women would go far beyond those domains listed by Coon; they actually had different living conditions from their representatives today, at least for the most part.

They possibly developed the knowledge of local life

being indirectly responsible for the domestication of animals. They also contributed to food, provided the food base of many groups, obtaining vegetables, roots and fruits, sources safer than meat. Women had the knowledge of cooking and food, which is restricted to them, a unique potential to keep the group together (see fig. 3).

The differences between the genders were small, it seems to us, but they determined who kept the children and who practiced outside activities, for example. Pregnancy and breastfeeding could not deny female exclusivity. Thus, women were largely responsible for harvesting nutritious vegetables and catching small animals, as well as caring for the camp and fire. Men hunted, protected the group, and performed the ceremonies.

It is known that all these tasks could have been divided, and/or done together (except, of course, natural breastfeeding and pregnancy), as attested by ethnographic research with North American tribes, for example, where there is flexibility in defined gender roles. Thus, Palaeoindians, in general, throughout the American continent, may have organized their daily lives indefinitely *a priori* (see fig. 4).

The determining factors for women to stay at home did not prevent them from developing a very important aspect for the life of the groups, the domestication of animals, which occurred probably thanks to the proximity of women to their small animals. One can add to this the maternal instincts and the caresses transmitted by the women and the fact that the children came into contact with the puppies that they brought to the camps, for example, while they played, and/or the interest of the animals in the easy foods of the ancestral groups available there.

On the other hand, presumably, the small animals would have been accompanying men or women, because certain animals were there lurking, surrounding and analyzing human daily life, facilitating the relationship with humans. Breastfeeding, represented in the rock record above, did not prevent the forceful insertion of women into sociocultural and daily life at the same time. Girls in primitive societies probably became women at first menstruation. Human nature itself unveiled its maturation, while ceremonies, rites, and myths were indispensable for men. To form a woman, they themselves dissembled with their own



Fig. 3. Toca da Pedra Preta I, Serra Branca, Parque Nacional da Serra da Capivara-PI. Family scene. Source: Authors' collection, 2017.

nature. In this way, women gave birth with its initial guarantees of nutrition for all (see fig. 5).

In PARNA, some female representations were made larger than men, which showed, perhaps, a great appreciation of the female gender in these societies, as it was at the birth scene. Women, trees and animals were responsible for multiplication, for the survival of the species. Thus, they had, it seems, respect within the primitive communities. In addition to being responsible, often directly for the survival of the group, the women collaborated in food collection, preservation, and preparation. They also developed tannery and fur conservation techniques.

In the rock paintings of Piauí, the indication of the male genitalia occurred in different ways from the feminine ones. For the female genitalia, the artists used a semicircle or a circle, but the common one was to present the belly in a prominent form, as in the case of the pregnant women. Iroquois, a Canadian indigenous group, exemplify the importance of women to all ancestral groups. For them, not considering women's counsels was an offense. They were recognized as the owners of the land and responsible for the generation of the lives of all, and venerated for this magic feature.

Although education was generally the responsibility of women, hunting education was a male endeavor. The act of hunting was educational because it provided a great exercise for body and mind. Hunting encouraged cooperation, self-control, aggression, ingenuity, and invention. In other words, hunting was a great school for the formation of human groups. But

as Jean Auel points out in his writings, which are recognized by the academy, there is the possibility that women have been hunters and/or participated in the pursuit of the flesh, as some ethnographic research shows. As Adovásio/Soffer and Page point out, in many groups' hunts could have also been a feminine role (see fig. 6).

### Final considerations

The main search in this article was to offer a decipherment of the ancestral world with regard to the world of the relations between the feminine and the masculine in the rock painting representations. We believe that it is necessary to undo the notions of borders, periphery and center, the importance of each place for the formation of world science, proposing with this assertion that from time immemorial we have intellectual connections between the most diverse and different places in the world. It is more than time to accept other writings, other thoughts, other ways of seeing the sciences: social, human, exact and or biological. Interdisciplinarity is an outlet for new and future analytical reflections.

Other ways of seeing also need to be accepted. We seek in this article to diverge from prejudiced positions about who knows and who does not know, who does science, why and where. We accept literature to help us think about ancestral time, for example. We use ethnographies for comparisons between the vestiges of time immemorial and events of the present.



Fig. 4. Toca do Baixão da Vaca, Serra da Capivara, Parque Nacional da Serra da Capivara-PI. Honey collecting, a female activity. Source: Authors' collection, 2017.



Fig. 5. Toca do Baixão do Perna V. Breast feeding, Serra Talhada, Parque Nacional da Serra da Capivara–PI. Source: Authors' collection, 2017.



Fig. 6. Toca do Alto do Fundo da Pedra Furada, Serra da Capivara, Parque Nacional da Serra da Capivara–PI. Hunting scene. Source: Authors' collection, 2017.

The rock paintings of Piauí can contribute to the decipherment of the world of yesterday and today. Analyzing them may even contribute to amplify their historical relations and knowledge about the ancestral world, showing that the groups that formerly inhabited Brazilian lands had their voices somehow shaped by the rocks. There they inscribed relations, stories, fantasies, dreams, and fears.

We have shown that women from long before 1500 were fighters and made a difference within their groups. They shared, collaborated, cooperated, and played an important role in groups of hunters and gatherers. They were of fundamental importance in many sociocultural actions such as: hunting, gathering, walking, social administration, and education of loved ones.

We seek to understand the life of the first inhabitants of the country, especially the explanatory details and those related to women. We hope that these details can be examples for our present life to think, as a society, of social policies that are more powerful for women. It is understood that it is possible to examine the creativity of our ancestors and from there to find useful details in our cultures today.

The female presence in the rock scenes with their social participation was not fortuitous and had, yes, reason. It was thanks to the respect, remembered by some tribes, that probably the women owned and contributed effectively to the maintenance of the life in group.

We are certain that this is the role of our academic research, increasingly revealing ways of life, historical subjects, and relationships that help us to better understand human society. In this article, we seek through the rock paintings and their representations of the feminine, to overturn the prejudices against women, which, despite the path of history, still persist. If this study collaborates in this struggle, it will be a great achievement.

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## WOMEN IN PREHISTORIC AND TRIBAL SOCIETIES OF ARABIA

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The present or recent past tribal values restricting free movement of women without the veil, not to talk, not to answer and not to demand but to keep eyes and head down and obey whatever man says, do not exist anymore in many present Arab societies. It was also so in prehistoric cultures as is represented in the rock art images of women in the Arabian Peninsula. However, in some Bedouin tribes such restrictions continued and women are not as free as in urban societies. However, men's superiority and control of women still existed in tribal societies.

Male dominance continued since times unknown and

is traceable by men and women images in the rock art of Saudi Arabia (fig. 1) carved on the vertical surface of a hill 200 m high at Hima, Najran, in the south of the country. A man wearing a turban or crown-like headdress, holding spears and shield in the hands, is shown in standing posture, while a woman bending under his armpit, as if seeking protection, indicates the strength and power of the man and the woman's weakness. Emphasis is given to the prominent sexual traits of the couple. The ibex in the composition is probably a totemic animal shown as the protector and honor of the couple. The small camel figures were added later and are not part of the panel.

On the contrary, at the Neolithic rock art sites at Jabal Qattar, Hail, north of the kingdom (fig. 2), a man and a woman are standing near each other, suggesting their close and equal relationship. In fig. 3, it appears as if the woman is ahead of the man and the cow is following her. Here we see the superiority of woman. In all societies from Neolithic until today a woman

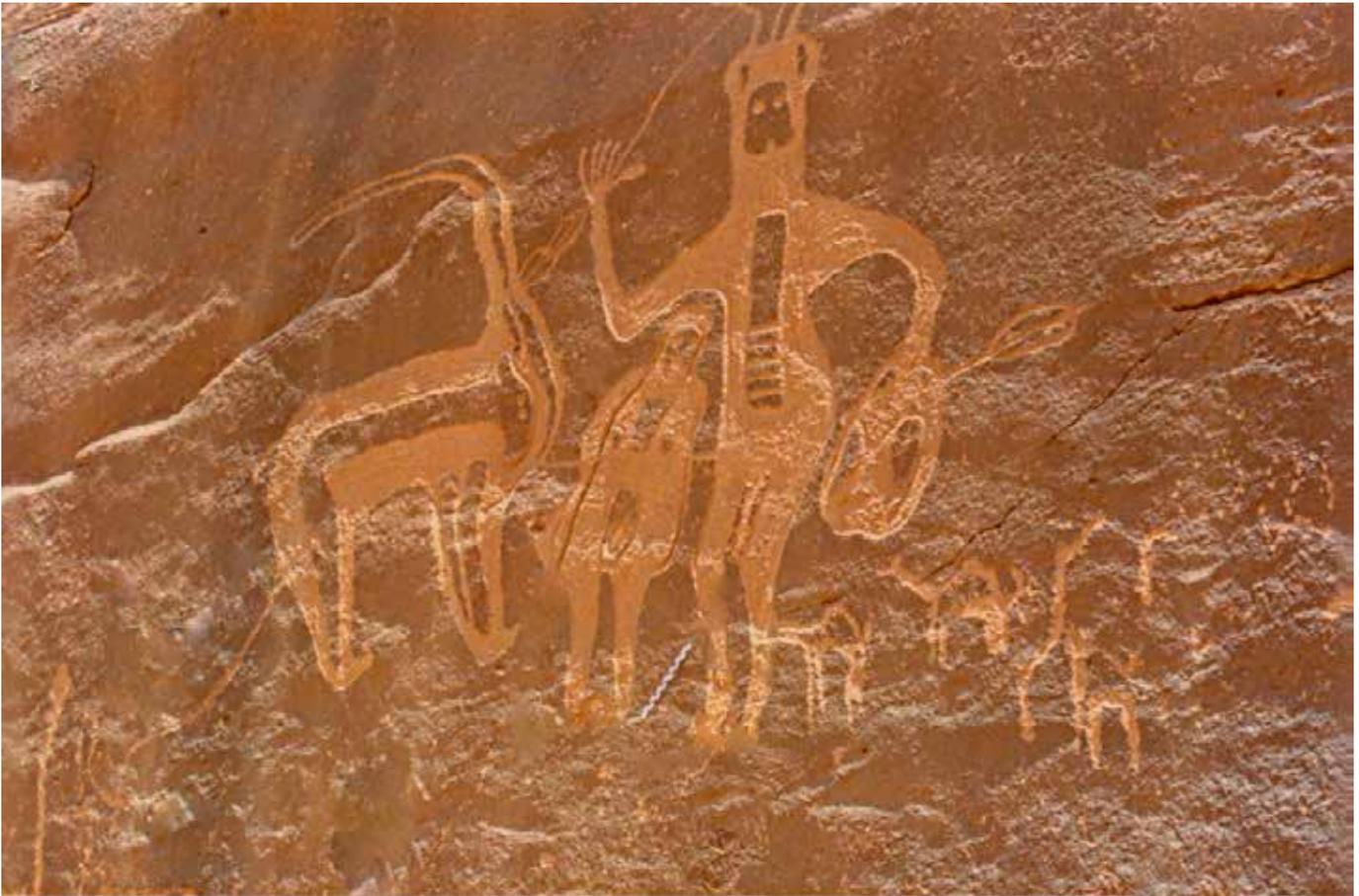


Fig. 1. Hima, Najran. Man's superiority and woman's inferiority with prominent sexual traits meant to indicate the woman's role in sex, only highlighted by the artist of Bronze Age c. 2500 BCE. Located at Hima, Najran, south of the country.

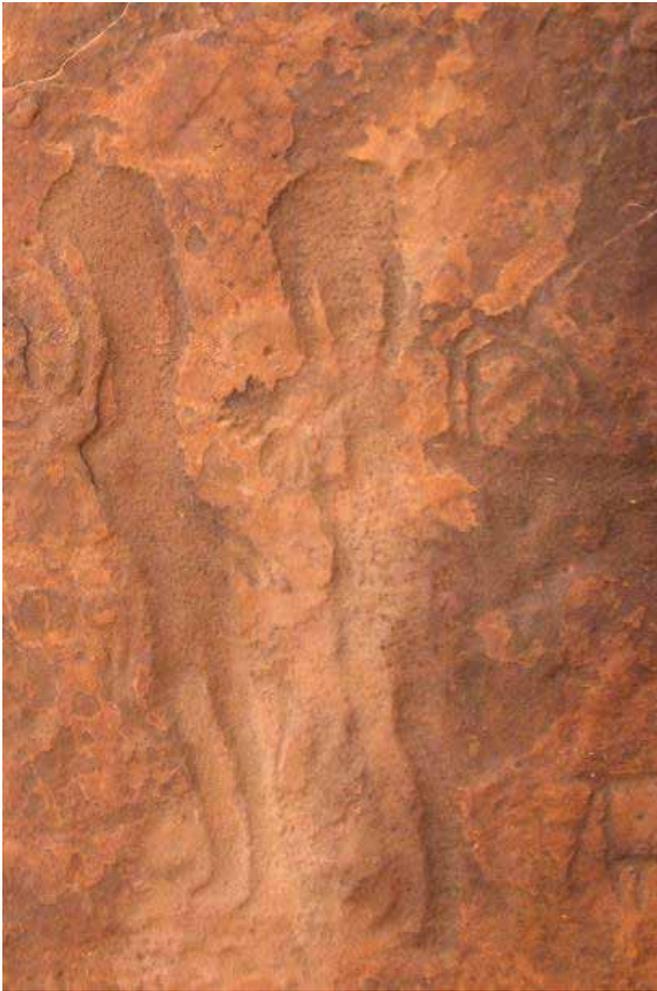


Fig. 2. Adam and Eve, the Neolithic couple carved near a rock-shelter at Jabal Qattar, Hail, north of Saudi Arabia (7500 BCE). Here again the ibex is associated with the couple. Ibex is the most common animal found in the rock art of all cultural periods from Neolithic to the Late Iron Age.

dances in front of a man to please him, and in temples and religious rituals to please gods or deities (fig. 5; in some cases couples are dancing for pleasure (fig. 4). Although men and women are intimate for sexual pleasure (Figures 6 and 7), even in present-day societies women are considered to be made for men's pleasure and services. In prehistoric sexual scenes (Figures 6 and 7), small men make love with big women, indicating "Oh woman, whatever height, position and status you are ... we are the dominating power." This was men's character, thinking and attitude towards women in the past and it is the same in the present tribal and our modern societies.

There is evidence of the higher position of women in the prehistory of Arabia, such as the female goddess

represented in fig. 8, carved on a rock located in a remote and barely accessible site at Hima, Najran. Different phases of the moon were marked over the head and on the body of the goddess (fig. 8). It was probably the moon goddess worshipped by the ancient Arabs. A girl is sitting and playing the *rubā'ab*, a musical instrument still used by the Arab Bedouins, and the man is holding spears and a dagger attached to the body, with a prominent headdress suggesting a prominent personality. Several ancient Arabian inscriptions were added later and are not part of what I consider as an open-air temple. When the icons of deities (male and female) were created, there were certainly no inscriptions on the rock.

Hundreds of women figures were carved on the hills, mountains and rock boulders in the Hima and Najran area of southern Arabia. In this part of south Arabia, a popular deity was worshipped in prehistory known as Alia. Among local Bedouins Alia is considered as the goddess of love, sex and fertility (Figures 9, 10). Alia is depicted on several sites in Najran, Bisha and Baha in Saudi Arabia (Khan 2000) and on the hills and mountains in the north of Yemen (Jung 1991b), roughly covering a triangular area that I have named the Alia Triangle (Khan 2008). Sexual traits are prominently carved on the religious icons of Alia. Her long thin neck, triangular torso, thin waist, long hair falling on the shoulders and on some reaching the waist, no doubt was almost like present-day beauty models. We may assume that women in prehistoric society were treated with respect and dignity. Surprisingly, the images of Alia when dated (8<sup>th</sup> century BCE) are contemporary with the famous Queen of Sheba in Yemen mentioned in the biblical narrative in the Book of Kings and in the *Quran* in Surah An-Naml, verses 20-44. It is possible the Arab Bedouin tribes in north of Yemen and south of Saudi Arabia living in the Alia Triangle draw the image of the Queen of Saba or Bilqis and call it Alia the queen, the goddess. There is no doubt that Alia was worshipped, as is evident from many identical figures with upraised arms located at Bedouin camping, living and caravan routes. Fig. 9 of Alia is depicted on a prominent location near a rain water reservoir at Hima area, her upraised arms, prominent and deep vulva associated with human hands stretched towards her in supplication.

But surprisingly, women figures are extremely few in



Fig. 3. Woman followed by men and an ox showing woman's superiority. Shuwaymis, northern region. Dated Neolithic, 10,000 BCE.



Fig. 4. Dancing couple, man and woman with daggers attached to their waists, while the outlined female figure was added later. Bullet marks at the top right indicate Bedouins using rock art figures as targets. It was also a common practice among the Bedouins or desert dwellers to add names besides existing images. Jabal al-Kaukab, Najran. Dated Bronze Age c. 2500 BCE.



Fig. 5. Jubbah, Hail. General view and detail. Dancing men and women, dated Neolithic, 7500 BCE. The ox is associated with the social or ritual dance. In Arabia Neolithic women are usually dancing freely and involved in social or religious rituals. The panel indicated a clan or tribal society existed in Arabia in the Neolithic period.



Fig. 6. Love in the desert, a sexual ritual performed in the desert. A man and woman dancing together. Hima, Najran area. Dated 2500 BCE.



Fig. 7. Dancing and making love, located at Baha, southwestern region. Dated Bronze Age, c. 2500 BCE.

the rock art of the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula, and they are not shown with sexual traits. There is a drastic difference in the representations of male and female figures in the north and south of Arabia. This shows a social and cultural difference in both pre-historic and tribal societies of the two regions. Interestingly, this difference still existed in the social life of the two areas. If one wants help in the desert in the north and reaches a Bedouin tent for help, a woman will come out of her tent with a gun in her hand, her face covered by a veil, and say "Please go away, there is no man in the house". She will not listen to you at all. On the contrary, if you go to a Bedouin tent in the south, a woman will come out with an open face, smiling, and will ask what you want. She will say she is sorry there is no man in the house, but please come and have a cup of coffee. This cultural difference continued in tribal Arabia from times unknown. Women in the north were more confined and restricted while in the south they were and still are more free and friendly.

The Neolithic record indicated women were involved in social dances (fig. 5), standing near men (fig. 2), while in later periods a woman is shown as a deity or goddess. But in later Bedouin periods she was totally controlled by man, keeping her in the veil with no free movement and connection with outside world. Among Arab tribes, women kept in their houses or tents and were not allowed to go out freely. In the present women in towns and cities are mostly free to do jobs in all commercial organizations, go to school or college and even go out without the veil and with an open face, which was impossible a few years back. Saudi women are now working with men in banks, ministries, hospitals and in almost all government or private organizations. In spite of this freedom, Saudis still strictly maintain their cultural traditions, their folk songs, dances and tribal affiliations. Drastic cultural changes can be seen in Arabian society now, Bedouins or desert dwellers are settled in towns and cities but still maintain their tribal affinity and



Fig. 8. Moon goddess associated with a concubine playing the *rube'ab* for her. Moon sign near the head and different phases marked on the body. Dated Early Iron Age, c. 1500 BCE.



Fig. 9. Alia, the goddess of love, sex and fertility, worshipped during the period of Queen Bilqis or Saba in Yemen, dated 900-800 BCE.



Fig. 10. Several images of Alia depicted near a rain water collection place at Jabal al-Kakub, Hima, Najran, dated 800-1000 BCE. Bedouin women in traditional veil.



Fig. 11. Arab women in modern veil, bedouin women in traditional veil.

cultural entities. The tribal, clan and family system is still based on centuries-old tribal patterns and tribal women do not have total freedom of marriage, traveling and working. In this regard prehistoric women as shown in the rock art images seem to have more freedom and respect. Dancing with men in social, cultural or religious ceremonies was common, but that is not allowed in present tribal society.

The moon goddess (fig. 8), Alia the goddess of love, sex and fertility (Figures 9, 10,) indicated the status of woman was much higher in prehistoric periods compared with later tribal and modern Arab cultures.

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# THE WOMEN OF CENTRAL INDIAN ROCK ART: DISCOVERY, DOCUMENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

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## Introduction

Central Indian rock art (Banerjee 2015) demonstrates a myriad of representations of women (Hays-Gilpin 2004; Keyser *et al.* 2006) engaged in different activities. But the depictions of women and their activities have been few when compared with naturalistic animal motifs, images of animal hunting and groups of people engaged in feuds and/or battle scenes (Chakraverty 1999, 2009, 2011). Women represent the Chalcolithic and Early Historic lifeways of different groups of people in the rock art of Central India (Banerjee and Srivastava 2013; Mathpal 1984). The states of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh in Central India (Figures 1 & 2) have a few sites which provide a glimpse of the presence of women in certain household scenes. Apart from this, women are also found engaged in several group dancing scenes and themes related to music and musical instruments. Household scenes have been quite rare in the entire corpus of Central Indian rock art; however, the presence of a few scenes depict that women did portray an active role in Chalcolithic and Early Historic societies. The themes and scenes are mostly related to group dynamics, entertainment, and family values like breastfeeding and rearing of children; however, sometimes women have been found engaged in load-bearing activities. These activities, like working inside a hut and/or tent settings are extremely rare in the rock art of other parts of the world. Only in Central India do we find such concentrations of rock art that portray these rich depictions of women in various modes of daily lives that comprise a bigger picture for womenfolk. In-depth

research (Banerjee and Srivastava 2014; Chakravarty and Bednarik 1997) in many different parts of Central India suggests that chronologically the paintings belong to the Early Historic period which sometimes stretches back to the Chalcolithic period but definitely not before.

## Methodology

Rigorous fieldwork (González-Aguilera *et al.* 2009; Robinson 2006; Whitley 2016) has been carried out in many different parts of Central India, particularly Pachmarhi Biosphere, Rewa and Mirzapur, to identify motifs related specifically to women and the activities revolving around the societies depicted at specific rock-shelters. A few new sites have been discovered and explored in the Mirzapur and Rewa regions which strengthen the data related to the presence of women in Central Indian rock art enormously. The antecedents of Indian folk art and later on the depictions of women in Indian temple architecture can be found here, in the rock art corpus. Therefore, a careful scrutiny of each and every element is necessary. For this study the representations of women have been selected and isolated from the entire database to construct a stand-alone and special case, since the themes related to women are important and form a solid foundation for such studies. On several occasions due to taphonomic alterations and environmental pollution most of the paintings are faded and difficult to see, so that initial first-hand comprehension is often not possible. The paintings are located in the open-air rock-shelters and at different and difficult parts of the shelters which are amenable to all sorts of natural and anthropogenic hazards. Hence, D-Stretch software (Banerjee *et al.* 2018; Harman 2005) has been used to make the images visible for data visualization and interpretation.

## Types of women in Central Indian rock art

A few of the women motifs in the rock art of Central India are quite striking. Dancing women (fig. 3) in various groups forming a vast array of combinations is a type. A single woman breastfeeding and rearing children is another type (fig. 4). Women engaged in household activities with children and other members of the family inside the huts and/or tents are the third type (fig.5). A fourth type (fig. 6) is women engaged

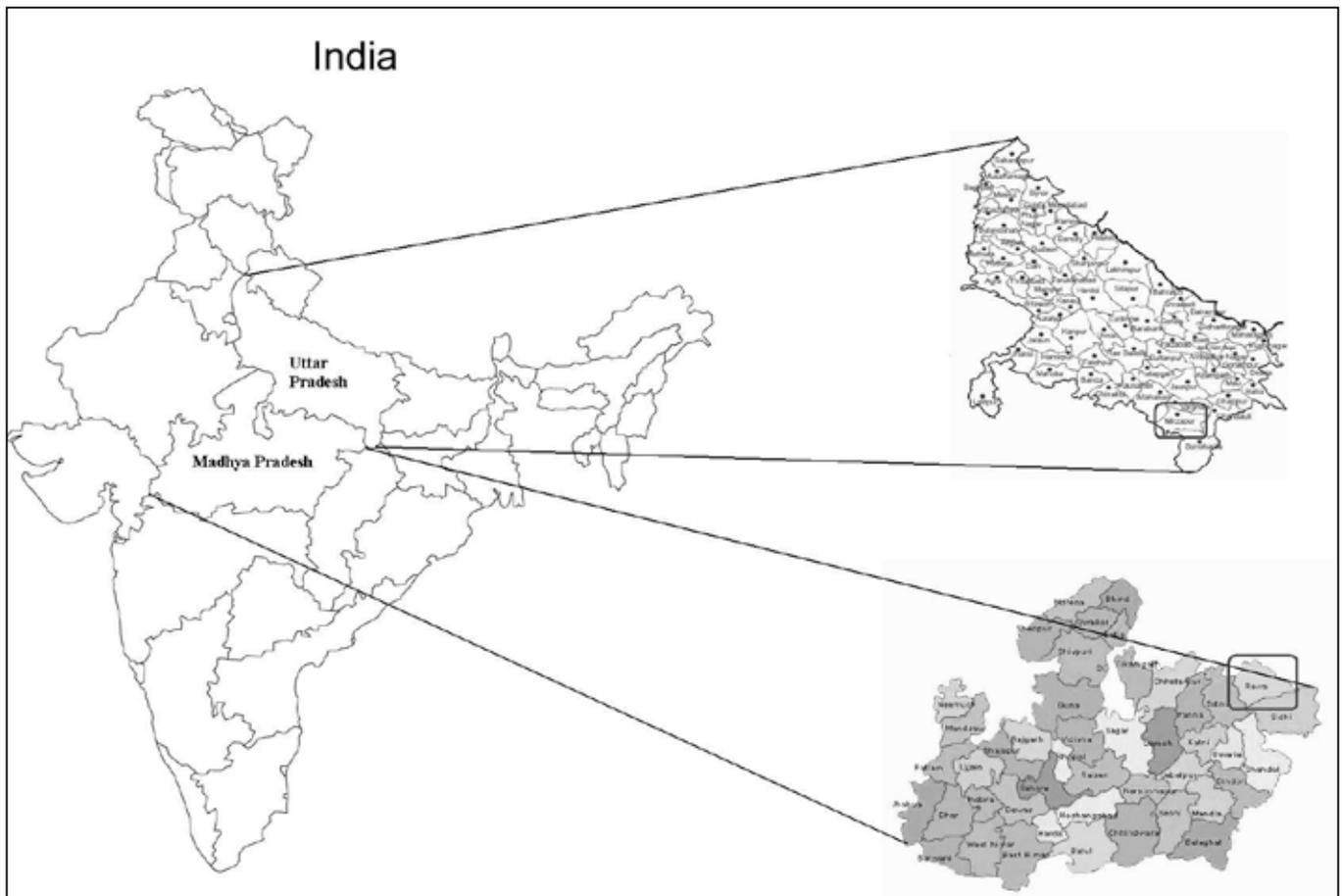


Fig. 1. Layout of the Study Area, MP and UP.

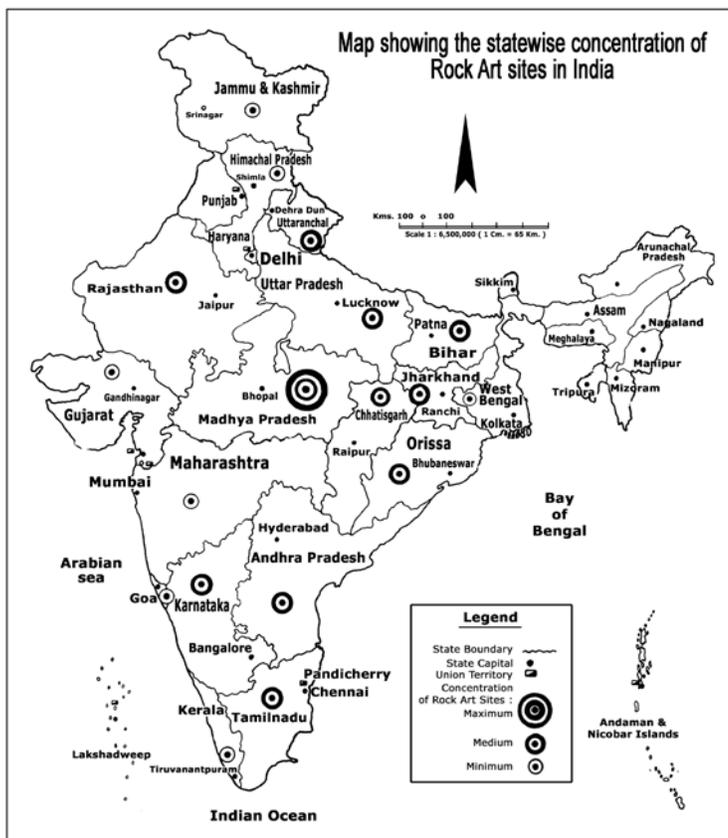


Fig. 2. Concentration of Rock art in India, Courtesy, Prof. Somnath Chakraverty



Fig. 3. Dancing women, Pachmarhi Biosphere, MP, photo and processing, Ruma Banerjee.

in singing, and women playing musical instruments is the fifth element (fig. 7) in the rock art corpus. Another one is a woman engaged in load-bearing activities, the sixth type (fig. 8), which definitely belongs to the Early Historic period rock art, although it says a lot about the role of women in the past societies. The last one represents a much older woman (fig. 9), drastically contrary to the previous load-bearing woman walking with a stick, depicts the plight and predicaments of old age in past societies of the Central Indian region. All these types quite vividly detail the stylistic variations, range of different activities and division of labour as clearly depicted in rock art. Most of the Chalcolithic paintings are made of white colour and different shades of white.

However, the use of bichrome is not unpopular. In a few cases bichrome (Mathpal 1978) and even polychrome techniques and motifs are also found. Local ethnic-indigenous Kol, Mawasi, Bhil and Munda peo-



Fig. 4. Breastfeeding woman, Pachmarhi Biosphere, MP, photo, Prof. Somnath Chakraverty, processing, Ruman Banerjee.



Fig. 5. Household scene, Pachmarhi Biosphere, MP, women and children, photo & processing, Ruman Banerjee.



Fig.. 6. Singing Woman, Pachmarhi Biosphere, MP, Photo and Processing, Ruman Banerjee.

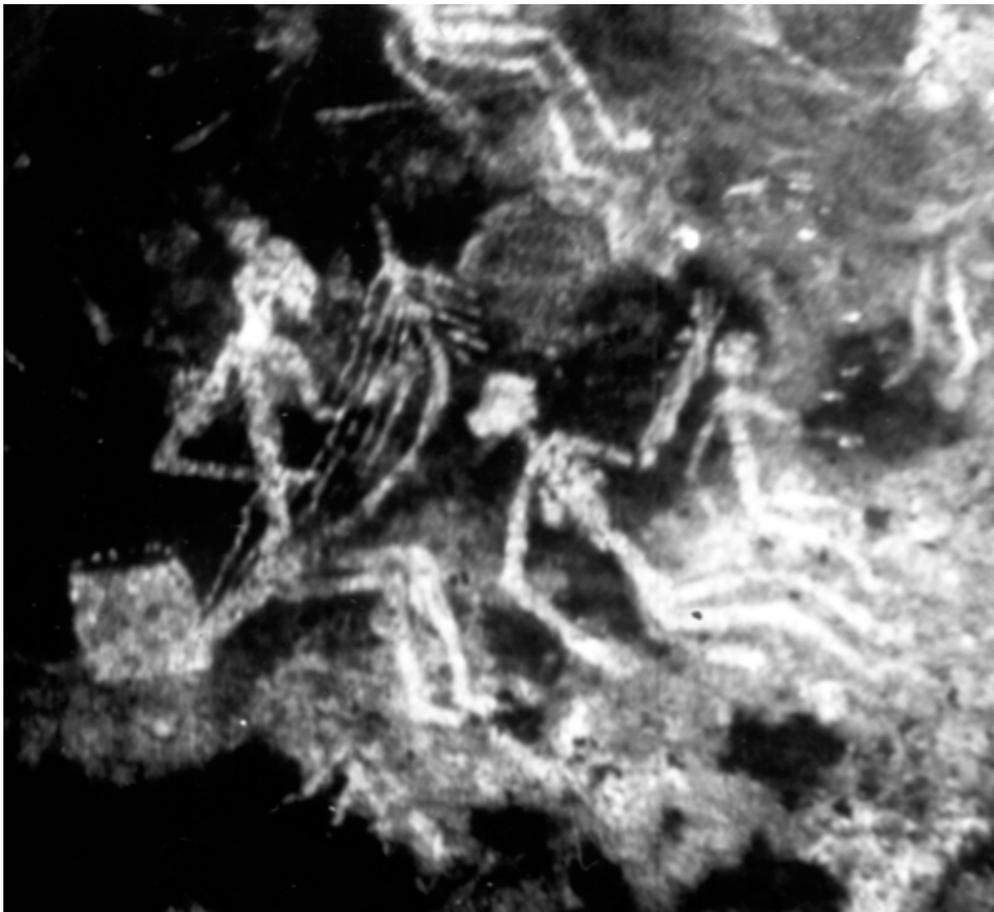


Fig. 7. Woman playing Harp, Pachmarhi Biosphere, MP, Photo Credit, Prof. Somnath Chakraverty and Processing, Ruman Banerjee.

Fig. 8. Woman engaged in load-bearing activity, Pachmarhi Biosphere, MP, photo credit, Prof. Somnath Chakraverty, processing, Ruman Banerjee.





Fig. 9. Old Woman with a walking stick, Pachmarhi Biosphere, MP, Photo&Procesing, Ruman Banerjee.

ple have been residing for a long period of time, even before the advent of the Harappan civilization (Giosan, *et al.* 2012; Possehl and Possehl 1982) located in the present western part of India in the Mirzapur region of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Rewa, Hoshangabad and Raisen districts of Madhya Pradesh (MP) (Chakravarty 1984). These ethnic-indigenous groups have several myths, which are popular in the region and provide a foundation of their collective community sentiments. These local myths are sometimes found depicted in the painted rock-shelters of Central and often some parts of eastern Indian regions. Essentially, these types of paintings are also historical in nature and deserve their own investigations. One such case is the story of a marriage ritual of the allegedly royal lineages, named Kohvar, of the mentioned ethnic groups. The myth of the nuptial couples is popular in these regions of Central India and some parts of eastern India. However, they can be found symbolically depicted in some of the rock-shelters (fig. 10). Among these particular paintings, a few depictions of women as one of the couples or the bride inside the marriage room (fig. 11) can be seen and they are painted in unique styles quite unfamiliar to the entire region. Stylistically and

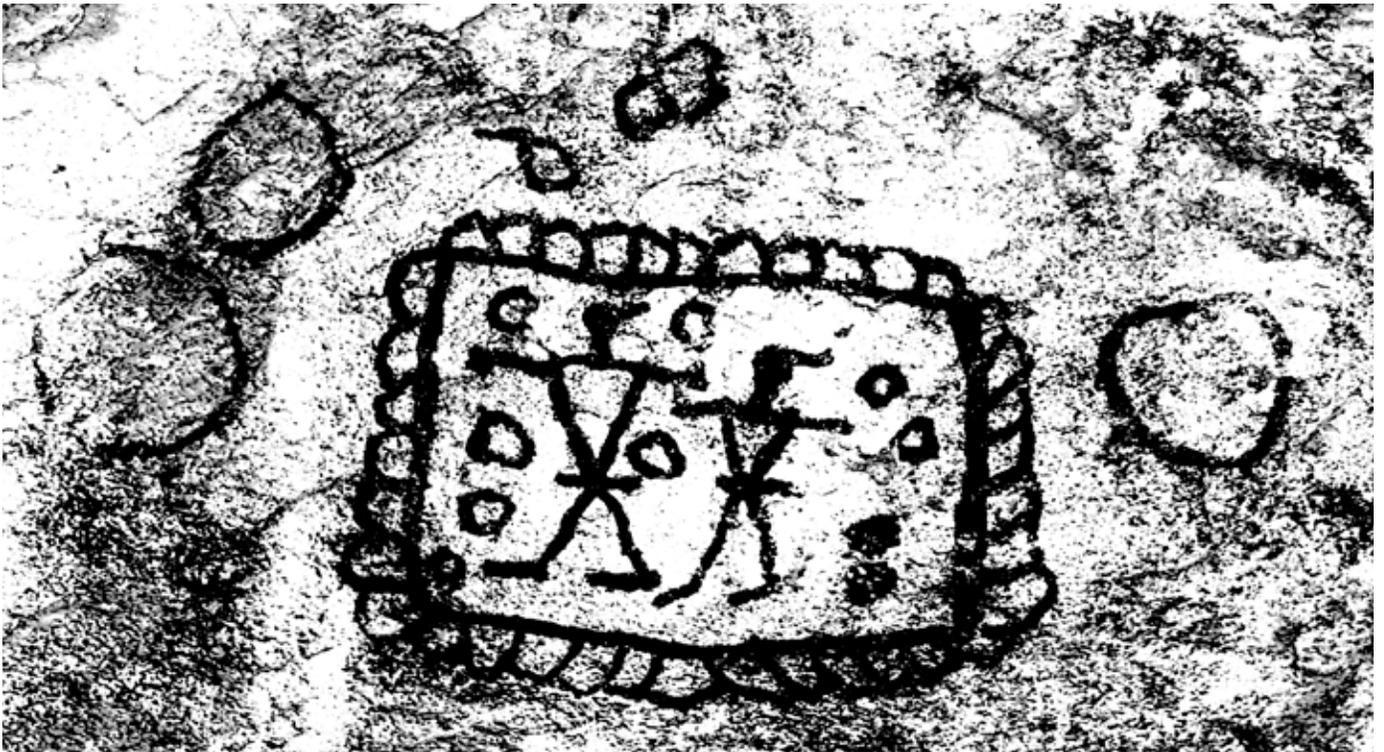


Fig. 10. Kohvar Marriage Room, Jharkhand, Eastern India, Photo Credit, Prof. Somnath Chakraverty, Processing, Ruman Banerjee.



Fig. 11. Kohvar Marriage Room, Mirzapur area, UP. Discovery, Photo and Processing, Ruman Banerjee.

in terms of colour scheme these paintings of women are quite different from the rest of the women motifs. The Kohvar motifs are uniform, standardized and colourful compared with other paintings related to women in the same regions. The advent of polychrome (Lorblanchet 1992) suggests that a clear continuity of style is present in the region. Monochrome, bichrome and polychrome motifs are found in the Central Indian record of rock paintings of women, which are exclusive and demand their own merit and discussion. Polychrome motifs appeared quite late in the Central region and must only be between a few hundred and a tentative 1,500 years old. Paint rejuvenation could be an issue here, where older paintings get repainted by successive groups of people over time and hence they get their prominent colours. However, in terms of superimpositions, themes and styles, it can safely be stat-

ed that polychrome motifs are a late introduction in the corpus of Central Indian rock art. Chronologically, thematically and in terms of hue, the depictions of women have been varied in different parts of Central India, showing a discrete division of labour, societal integrity, family cohesion, consolidated group behaviour and continuity of these activities across several generations.

#### **Role of women in Central Indian rock art: a discussion**

The role of women as shown by the rock art data on women is quite intriguing. The first phase is demarcated by the dancing motifs, joining hands in hands (Graham 2015; Malaiya 1999, 2014). Groups of women are found engaged in dancing activities forming different schematic combinations, like line-

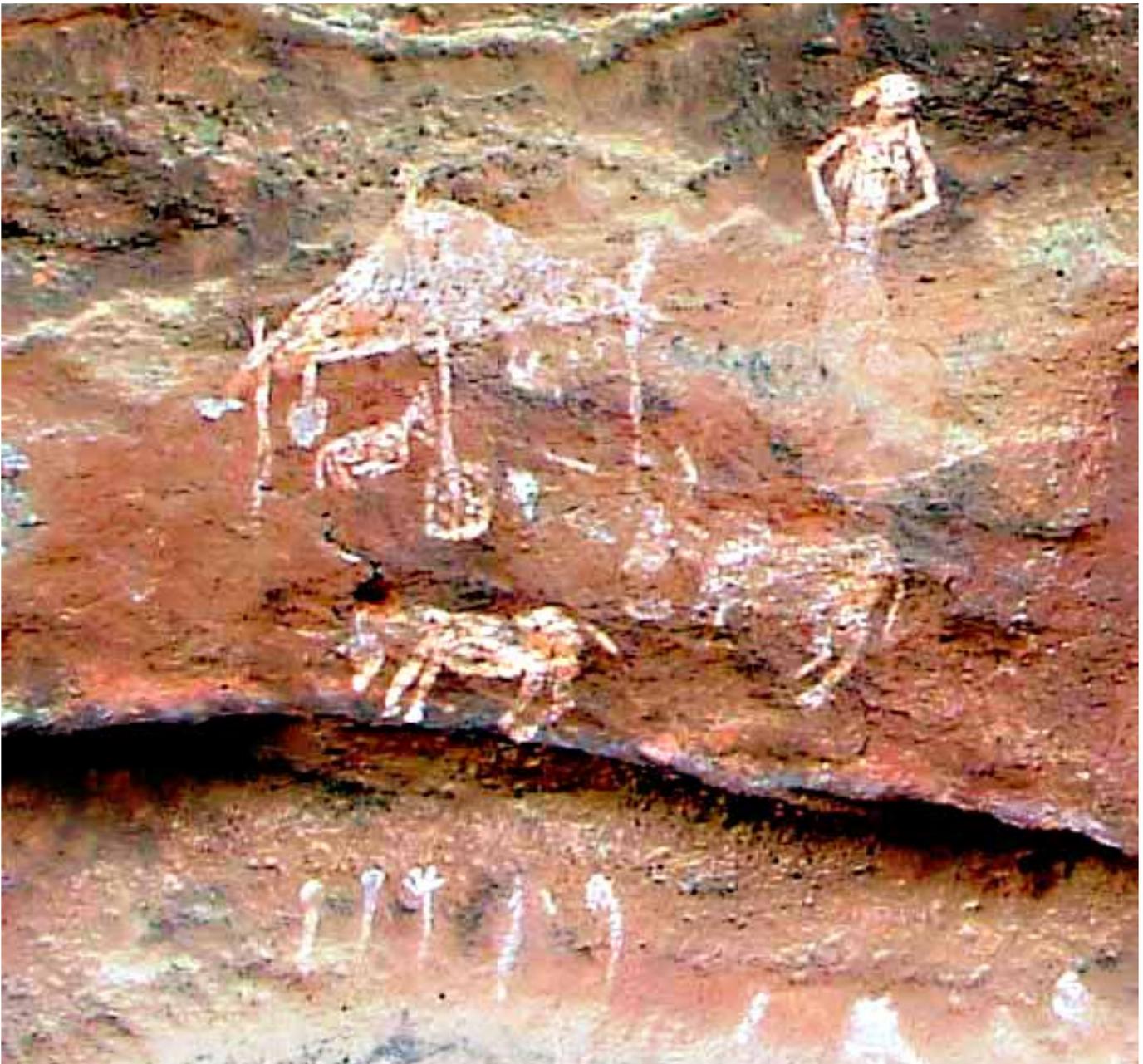


Fig. 12. Household Scene, Pachmarhi Biosphere, MP; Photo and Processing, Ruman Banerjee.

ar, circular, triangular, squares, rectangular, criss-cross and hash patterns. Other complex patterns can also be sometimes found. The household (fig. 12) dancing and singing elements (fig. 13) entangled with women appear first. Next comes the women with musical instruments and engaged with playing string and other wind instruments, such as the flute. The labour and load-bearing activities, including the mythical marriage relations and corresponding ceremonies (Banerjee *et al.* 2014; Chakraverty 1998; Prins and Hall

1994), and the morphology of the older women in the society appear consecutively and provide a total idea of the different dominant and pragmatic roles of women as deconstructed by rock art. From the rock art record, it is quite clear that womenfolk have been engaged in group activities (fig. 14), household, ceremonial, recreational and marital activities. The relational values of the households and consolidated group dynamics in the Chalcolithic and Early Historic paintings are quite obvious here. Womenfolk consolidated their



Fig. 13. Dancing and Singing Woman, Pachmarhi Biosphere, MP, Photo and Processing, Ruman Banerjee.

Fig. 14. Women engaged in group activities at the centre, Pachmarhi Biosphere, MP, Proto and Processing, Ruman Banerjee.

own niche and probably helped in foraging, ceremonial and ritualistic activities, apart from regular household, marital and child-rearing activities, besides being engaged in various dance forms, entertainments, music and musical instruments. Apparently, a great deal of data on women is missing due to the gradual discoloration of the rock paintings. The total scenario would have been quite different, if all the data could have been retrieved and deciphered from the indistinct painted motifs relating to women and their total activities. In different areas of Central India taphonomic changes play havoc with rock art, making the proper decipherment of the art untenable. However, the present data as detailed here suggest that women did play a significant role in the Chalcolithic and Early Historic societies of Central India. Men were more engaged in hunting, pastoral and agricultural works, including battle, feuds and mercenary activities, with occasional engagements in ceremonial and recreational activities, as is supported by the rock art data from the same regions, whereas women mostly took care of relational, recreational, ceremonial, household and foraging activities.



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## WOMEN AND PREHISTORIC RITUALS IN THE ROUND HEAD ROCK ART OF THE SAHARA

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Although the earliest chronology of Saharan rock art remains the subject of controversy, most scholars believe that the Round Head paintings were produced mainly between 9,500 and 7,000 BP (Hachid, 1998; Hallier and Hallier, 1999; Mori, 2000; Jelínek, 2004; Soleilhavoup, 2007). This complex of paintings is dominated by anthropomorphic figures, followed by wild animals. Human figures present some very particular elements, such as horns, masks and body paintings which express the fundamental attributes used during special occasions. Indeed, the images are likely to represent sophisticated rituals and ceremonies held in this ancient society, as well as figures and scenes belonging to the oldest representations of religious systems in the world.

Of the anthropomorphic figures, c. 50% are represented by males and only 10% by females, the rest being unidentifiable (Sansoni, 1994; Muzzolini, 1995; Soukopova, 2012). The male figures are not only more numerous than the female ones but they are also aesthetically more elaborate: males are represented more frequently with body decoration, and body adornments characteristic of the Round Head complex are exclusive to men. There are numerous scenes in which males adorned with ritual attributes are side by side with women with no decoration.

From the analysis of the scenes, it is therefore evident that men had a predominant role in the ancient rituals, whereas the role of women was probably minor (Soukopova, 2016). It is mainly visible from the fact that women, if represented on the rock wall, are usually depicted with no decoration at all. However, there are several scenes in which the protagonists of rituals are women, or in which women are represented with male attributes, such as bows or horns. Here we present five examples of painted scenes where the role of women is significant.

### Women as protagonists of rituals

In the Round Head complex, we find rows of women depicted with raised arms, which may be interpreted as a worshipping posture. Moreover, the ancient Round Head style often represents single women, or groups of women with an umbilical hernia (fig. 1), which could indicate that women with this malformation had a special status within this hunting society. There are also cases of pregnant women, some of them in a worshipping posture (fig. 2).

One scene in the Libyan Acacus represents a row of three masked individuals, two men in a worshipping-like posture and a woman, who face another woman sitting in front of them (fig. 3). She is decorated with body paintings and she is wearing a mask too.

In at least three cases women are depicted around a large unidentifiable animal (fig. 4). Such scenes have been interpreted as possible fertility rituals (Mori, 2000), but unidentifiable DOWN-HEADED animals may also be interpreted as animals of the rain (Soukopova, 2011).

Related to fertility might also be a group of women depicted under an ancient rainwater cascade (fig. 6). During rains, water would fall over the scene and this is significant because the rock wall around the water cascade does not have any painting. The relationship of the paintings to the water is therefore evident.

### Fantastic creatures and women

There are several scenes in Round Head art which represent fantastic creatures, i.e. unrealistic anthropomorphic or zoomorphic figures. In rare cases, human-like fantastic creatures have female traits such as breasts (fig. 7). In a scene in the Tassili, a pregnant woman in a worshipping posture is depicted next to a masked male who is touching an unrealistic, possibly zoomorphic, creature (fig. 2).

### Women with male attributes

The characteristic elements of Round Head anthropomorphic figures are horns, bracelets, half-moon objects attached on shoulders, masks, bows, sticks and body paintings. Except for body paintings, which appear also on women, these characteristic elements are exclusive to men. However, in rare cases, they are connected to female figures too.

In the Tassili mountains at In Itinen and Tin Tazarift sites, there are two women holding bows (figs. 9, 5). Bows are normally related only to men; indeed, the eth-



Fig. 1. A row of women with an umbilical hernia and in a worshipping posture (Sefar, Tassili). Photo enhanced with DStretch.

nographic record indicates that the bow is a sign exclusive to post-initiation adult male hunters (Silberbauer, 1965; Lee, 1979). In Round Head art masks are typically male attributes but sometimes they also appear on women (figs. 3, 10).

At the Aouarnhat site in the Tassili, we find a female with two prominent horns coming out of her head (fig. 10). This is a unique association because horns are typically male attributes. Another woman at Sefar has bracelets on her wrists (fig. 11), which seems normal today, but in Round Head art bracelets were only depicted on male figures. A possible explanation is that the bracelet

represented the archery arm guard and it was therefore connected only to male hunters (Le Quellec, 2011).

#### **Women in situations which are exclusive to men**

In rare cases, women are depicted in situations that are normally reserved only for males. This is particularly the case of the so-called flying persons, i.e. human figures depicted in a horizontal position and thus possibly lying or flying. Flying men have been interpreted as individuals in a trance (Soleilhavoup, 2007), swimming individuals (Hallier and Hallier, 2010), or young individuals undergoing rites of passage into manhood (Soukopova, 2012).



Fig. 2. A pregnant woman in a worshipping posture next to a masked male and an unidentifiable creature (Sefar, Tassili). Photo enhanced with DStretch.



Fig. 3. A row of three masked individuals, two men and a woman, who are facing a sitting masked woman (Uan Tamuat, Aca-cus). Photo enhanced with DStretch.

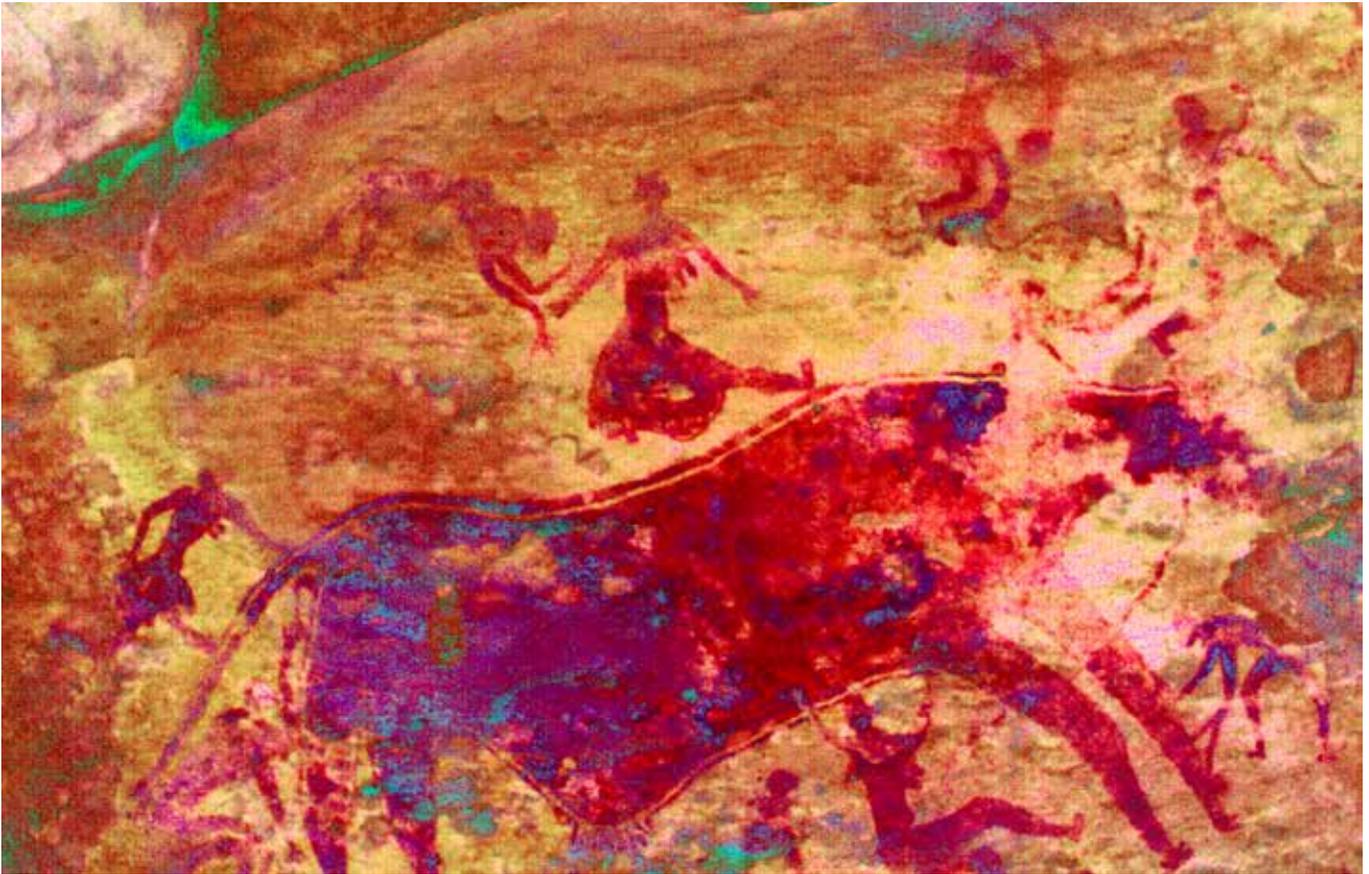


Fig. 4. Individuals around a large unidentifiable animal, at least three of whom are women (Tin Barsaoula, Acacus). Photo enhanced with DStretch.



Fig. 5. A woman shooting a bow (Tin Tazarift, Tassili). Photo enhanced with DStretch.

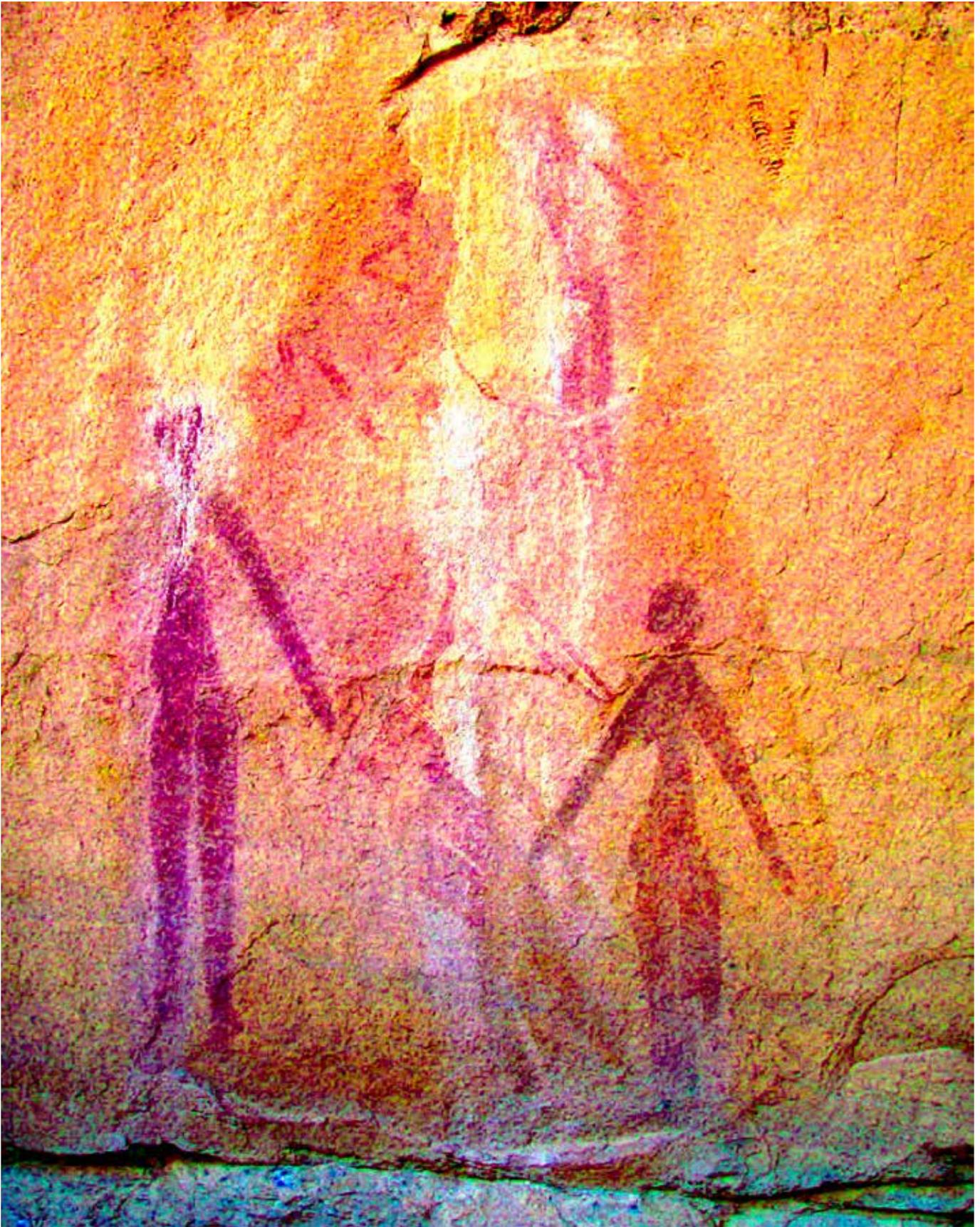


Fig. 6. A group of women painted under an ancient rainwater cascade (Tanshalt, Acacus). Photo enhanced with DStretch.



Fig. 7. A fantastic creature with raised arms, body paintings and breasts (Sefar, Tassili). Photo enhanced with DStretch.



Fig. 8. A woman with two horns coming out of her head (Aouarnhat, Tassili). Photo enhanced with DStretch.



Fig. 9. A woman holding a bow (In Itinen, Tassili). Photo enhanced with DStretch.



Fig. 10. A woman wearing a mask that is normally associated with men (Aouarnhat, Tassili). Photo enhanced with DStretch.



Fig. 11. A woman (on the right) with bracelets on her wrists (Sefar, Tassili). Photo enhanced with DStretch.



Fig. 12. A flying woman with disproportionately elongated arms and legs (Aouarnhat, Tassili). Photo enhanced with DStretch.

At Aouarnhat in the Tassili, a flying woman presents also unrealistically elongated arms and legs (fig. 12), which is another characteristic indicating an alternated state of consciousness (Lewis-Williams, 2004). One scene in the Algerian Tadrart represents unidentifiable objects and a flying man. However, the whole scene seems to be dominated by a female figure standing above them all with open arms (fig. 13).

### **Egalitarian position of men and women**

Scenes in which there is an evident relationship between a man and a woman are extremely rare in Round Head art. Two scenes in the Tassili mountains represent a sitting couple facing each other (figs. 11, 14). In both cases, the man and the woman are sitting in the same position with bent legs and arms stretching out towards each other.

### **Conclusion**

In the Round Head complex men are more numerous than women, they have more decorative elements and they are often bigger than women. For example, the large-sized figures up to 3 m high, known in the Tassili mountains as great gods, are all males. However, women are present on rock walls often mixed with male figures. Sometimes they are depicted in separated scenes which suggest that certain rituals or ritual behaviors were the domain of women. In a few cases, women are represented with elements that are exclusive to men, such as the bow, horns or bracelets, or they are depicted in situations that normally belong to men, namely the flying position. There are also several fantastic creatures with breasts, which indicate that females were present in ancient mythology or stories.

Although they are less numerous than male figures, a certain importance of women in the spiritual life of



Fig. 13. A woman standing next to unidentifiable objects and a flying man (Wadi Moulenaga, Algerian Tadrart). Photo enhanced with DStretch.

this hunting society is evident. Their lesser incidence in rock art must not be misleading and it may simply indicate that women as mothers and housekeepers could not always afford to venture into the mountains to produce paintings. Rock art production became thus the domain of male hunters experiencing without doubt much greater freedom. Considering also a major incidence of male attributes and body decorations, it is likely that rituals in this ancient Central Saharan society were more frequently performed by men.

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Fig. 14. A sitting couple facing each other (Techakelaouen, Tassili). Photo enhanced with DStretch.

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# NOTES AND NEWS

From ATELIER, RESEARCH CENTER FOR CONCEPTUAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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## CONCEPTUAL ANTHROPOLOGY A NEW DISCIPLINE OF THE HUMAN SCIENCES

### PREMISE

What is conceptual anthropology? It is an emerging discipline dedicated to the spirit of culture, dealing with the expressions of the cognitive system, arts, beliefs, traditions, and other intellectual and spiritual expressions. It is the subject of **EXPRESSION**, a quarterly journal published in English, and of several series of books issued by Atelier-edit, the publishing sector of ATELIER, Research Center for Conceptual Anthropology.

ATELIER is an experimental laboratory dedicated to the new discipline, created and directed by Prof. Emmanuel Anati. The headquarters of this center are in the village of Capodiponte, Camonica Valley, Italy, a major center of prehistoric rock art in the UNESCO list of the cultural world heritage where, half a century ago, the scientific discipline of rock art research was born.

### HOW CONCEPTUAL ANTHROPOLOGY WAS BORN

The idea of creating a unique incubator for the study of art, religion, social relations, and other intellectual, emotional and spiritual aspects of human culture had a long gestation. It took a first formal step during the International Congress of Prehistory of Florianopolis, Brazil, in 2011. Participants at the session of CISENP “International Scientific Commission on the Intellectual and Spiritual Expressions of Non-Literate Peoples”, chaired by Prof. Anati, decided to recognize the fledgling discipline of conceptual anthropology as the commitment of the commission. With CISENP col-

laboration, the research center ATELIER for conceptual anthropology started operating, publishing **EXPRESSION** quarterly magazine. To date over 200 authors from 43 countries on five continents have published their articles in **EXPRESSION**. In seven years the Atelier publishing sector has published over 50 books that form the basis of the new discipline. The global interest shows that conceptual anthropology is filling a gap: it appears to be a positive step in the evolution of human sciences.

### THE PURPOSE OF THE NEW DISCIPLINE

The purpose of this new discipline is the understanding of human behavior, the processes of changes and development, recurrent and isolated phenomena, cultural changes and developments, and predictable and unpredictable events. It combines the experiences and methodologies of different disciplines, from psychology to history, from archaeology and anthropology to sociology, art history, and the history of religions. These are all aspects of culture intimately connected to each other, expressions of the human spirit that lead to the discovery of the mind that produced culture: motivations, influences, emotions, causes of what remains as effect. It adds a fourth dimension to traditional archaeology. Each discipline of the humanities is a source of conceptual enrichment for the others. The multidisciplinary comparative research is proving to be a source of thoughts and innovations for each one of the single traditional disciplines. Aimed at first to study the prehistoric and tribal world, conceptual anthropology is opening up to new sectors such as the trends of contemporary societies and the social and cultural phenomena that characterize them; this tendency is already covered by recent books from Atelier.

## THE CONCEPT OF CONCEPTUAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Conceptual anthropology studies the concepts and motivations of cultural expressions and of human performance brought to light by archaeology, anthropology, history, customs, and popular traditions, the sociological reality of human behavior and other areas of the humanities. From this vast emporium of spiritual and conceptual expressions there emerge the tendencies of man and society; the aim is to understand trends and become sources of scientific research, education, vocational training, and new guidelines of rational thought. Every event, every detail, expresses part of a larger reality. Humanity is the set of individuals that form it, culture is the set of cultures. Conceptual anthropology opens up vast landscapes in the dynamic vision of culture that is evolving and changing, but always remains the core identity of the human species. Knowing the processes of change in culture, in its various aspects, art, religion, behavioral tendencies, and social processes, opens perspectives for understanding evident and also less evident tendencies in society and a new type of social consciousness. Each discipline has its own memory that is the basis of identity, research, and the advancement of the discipline itself. The combination of disciplines is also the union of memories from which to draw for a new base and more extensive research and culture. Today the media and encyclopedias take charge of technology. But the human mind is still irreplaceable in its instincts, intuitions, associations, and emotions. Conceptual anthropology also explores aspects that are not provided by technical databases. Every discipline and every expression of culture, like every being, focusses on certain aspects of memory and neglects others. The memory of the various disciplines has a different dimension from that of a single discipline. For conceptual anthropology the union of various disciplines of the humanities is opening up new areas of analysis and comparison, avoiding myopia and sectarianism. This new trend promotes joint commitments to multidisciplinary research. From anthropologists and archaeologists to psychoanalysts, educators, semiologists, sociologists, philosophers, and historians, there is a need for everyone to answer questions that joint effort can help clarify.

In the face of extreme specialization which reduces researchers to technicians, conceptual anthropology goes against the current. It tends to encourage the acquisition of broad humanistic culture and to train intellectuals, a derogatory term for experts but relevant to conceptual anthropology. Technicians and intellectuals have different backgrounds, different roles, and different orientations. No doubt technicians are needed and this is the trend of higher education in many cases: to create specialists, trained with technical

knowledge to be employed in a given functional sector. The conceptual anthropology scholar is also a specialist but with different criteria and different views. Vast knowledge opens wide horizons, promotes a panoramic cultural conception, to understand the spirit of man in its conceptual and decision-making expressions, in its emotional aspects, in human imagination, in feelings of love and hate, friendship and animosity, in relations with others and with oneself, in psychological attitudes, in cultural conditioning, and in insights. The function is to understand, to acquire existential consciousness and use it towards new horizons of research, to understand the events and the guidelines at the roots of human behavior from the distant past to the present. Knowledge is the antechamber of understanding. The broader knowledge is, the wider is the understanding. The orientation of conceptual anthropology is towards specialization in non-specialized areas, in a widely cultural vision, overview, intelligent, open, and not limited by sectoral indoctrination.

## EDUCATIONAL TOOLS AND TEACHING

### 1- Specialized and finalized publications as a means of formation

**EXPRESSION** journal comes out every three months. In four issues a year it carries out a continuous discourse, an accumulation of data and concepts, in a global overview. It is the main educational tool currently available to conceptual anthropology. The contest assets of more than 200 authors from five continents and from various disciplines of the humanities make it an educational means, and also a spontaneous and natural encyclopedia that is enriched with each number: it produces culture, collaboration, dialogue, and intellectual progress, connecting 80 countries.

Other ATELIER publications are expressions of this new discipline that involves students, scholars, and others, without geographical limits. It also reaches tribal societies in Africa, Australia, and the Pacific. Education and training are carried out through an open formula, available at world level: finalized reading. The traditional lecture in a classroom affects at most a few dozen students; education through publications can reach multitudes. Surely there are many thousands of potential acolytes. An important target is reaching them. The publications, in English and Italian are designed for the level of university students, but they are deliberately easy to read for everyone. For conceptual anthropology all of us, members of the human species, are potential students. Publishing is the educational and training means, accessible to everyone of all countries, free from the dependence on the four walls of the classroom. Being aimed at the conceptual aspects of anthropology, this pub-

lishing, which comes at a time of publishing crisis, proposes new horizons of teaching and dissemination of culture.

## **2 - Acquiring practical experience in conceptual anthropology**

In addition to the slow but expanding process of education through the distribution of publications, training in conceptual anthropology is carried out with practical work: learning by applying the discipline effectively. Compared with education in the classroom of university courses, the new trend goes against the current. The concept of apprenticeship is based on the individual training of each student, a new type of personalized school to guide each student to discover not only the practical application of research but also her/his potential identity. Being a new discipline, there are no teachers for now except for its inventor, Prof. Emmanuel Anati. Today's students are the teachers of tomorrow. They must be trained. Since there are no faculty or university courses in conceptual anthropology, the training is based on the individual practical work of each candidate. Graduate students in anthropology, archaeology and other disciplines of the humanities are the preferred type of candidate. In addition to the individual practical work training there can also be group activities: seminars, conferences, joint research projects.

**Seminars:** Specific issues are addressed, with written contributions from various participants, some of which find space for publication and dissemination in the **EXPRESSION** quarterly journal. The common language of 40 different countries is English. To keep the global international character of the discipline, the tendency is to limit local issues that may smack of provincialization. Nevertheless, local matters like local rock art or local social and cultural issues, are used as experimental topics for both research and teaching. The protagonists, students, researchers, and authors come from five continents; it is not easy to bring them together without the appropriate reception resources. Even in the absence of such support, meetings and seminars are organized to stimulate debate on specific issues. But the main means of cooperation remains the call for specific topics that attracts authors to contribute articles in **EXPRESSION** journal. Each issue is a sort of seminar, opening debates and relations between authors and readers without frontiers.

**Conferences:** To facilitate meeting and keeping alive the dialogue between followers of the new discipline, specific sessions are organized on the occasion of international congresses in archaeology and anthropology, that bring together participants from the entire world, where topics of world interest and innovative studies may be presented and discussed. World congresses on conceptual anthropology might soon become actual.

**Research teams:** Researchers can join in team research,

having access to laboratories, databases, and other resources of the ATELIER research center. Topics suitable for teams bring together researchers from various disciplines with a common target. Purely theoretical research is not excluded but as of the present, the tendency is to prefer specific practical themes.

**Exhibitions:** Organization of exhibitions has the aim of involving the general public. The cultural-educational slant of exhibitions refers to the principle of knowing the past in order to discover the present. Themes in anthropology or archaeology unite in common effort different disciplines of the humanities as well as graphic designers, architects, artists, educators, communications experts, to get a deep conceptual penetration to the public.

ATELIER, the international center for conceptual anthropology, has until now been geared towards an autonomous identity, in a constant confrontation between academia and anti-academia, aimed at the renewal of research, teaching, and also proposing a new type of concrete cultural tendency, sustainable, active, open and conscious, without barriers. It makes culture by producing culture, teaching is done by spreading knowledge and awareness. The classroom teaching is the planet earth. What matters is the results.

## **RESEARCH IN PROGRESS**

The research carried out is published and disseminated worldwide. Results are not meant to be stored in the academic cellars. They reach institutions and researchers from five continents and produce culture. Several themes are of world cultural relevance.

### **Some multidisciplinary research projects in progress:**

*Making history of prehistory*

*Decoding prehistoric art*

*The role of women in prehistoric and tribal societies*

*Analysis of the conceptual processes in cultural changes*

### **Some of the specifically monographic research projects:**

*Variable characteristics and functions of the decorations on the tapa cloths in the Pacific islands, Melanesia and Polynesia*  
*The significance of the monuments related to the cult at Har Karkom in the Negev desert, Israel*  
*The meaning of changing dominant pictograms in the periods sequence of prehistoric rock art of Valcamonica, Italian Alps*

### **Planned future research projects:**

*The roots of culture*

*Cultural trends: yesterday, today, tomorrow*  
*Defining the identity of Homo sapiens*

*The conceptual roots of writing*

*The origins of religions*

Some of the research projects come quickly to a conclusion, others can last longer, others again may awaken rethinking and become actual once more. In any case dialogues and debates are kept alive and produce culture. The research

results, often considered as in progress, are published in EXPRESSION journal and Atelier monographs; discussions and insights, further progress in research and further contributions provoke the constant movements of ideas.

### MAKING HISTORY OF PREHISTORY DETAILS ON ONE OF THE TOPICS IN PROGRESS

One of the toughest research projects in progress concerns the acquisition of historic notions on prehistoric times: making history of prehistory. The method is to promote discussion, solicit and receive written texts to be published in EXPRESSION journal or in the form of monographs, promote debates, then come to formulate conclusions or summaries. It is a dynamic system that combines research and teaching and leads to concrete results, publishable, diffusible and accessible to the public. In this line various aspects and results of research are already available.

A conceptual analysis of Australian Aboriginal art has allowed the reconstruction of the cultural evolution processes, events, migrations, the arrival of new populations, changes in cultural and historical influences in millennia previous to the Australians' rediscovery by Europeans. The results, though so far partials, are presented in the book *Australian Rock Art: A Study of conceptual anthropology* (Atelier. Edit, 2019).

Other research in conceptual anthropology, on the rock art of Valcamonica, has collected data and conclusions of half a century of research and publications to reach a reconstruction of 10,000 years of European history. Each rock incision has behind it a *raison d'être*, a motivation, a purpose and therefore also different depths of reading. The new framework is that of decoding. For ten millennia the Camunni peoples recorded their history through rock art: what did they want to convey? And what is the history of the ages that they are conveying to us? The purpose of the new trend is to transform the archaeological findings into historical documents; archaeological documents convert into historical documents, to reconstruct the history of what until now had been prehistory. Valcamonica offers Europe 10,000 years of newfound history, through the conceptual decoding and reading of rock art. Today's research becomes tomorrow's culture and enters textbooks across Europe. Europe is discovering 10,000 years of its own history. The results are presented in the book *The Rock Art of Valcamonica* (Atelier. Edit, 2015).

Other research with a similar vision concerns decoding Palaeolithic art, which was brought back to light for over a century. The methods of conceptual anthropology permitted the decoding, deciphering, and reading of what had been considered mute beauties. This research led to a result

of exceptional importance by decoding certain paintings and engravings that contained messages in a pictographic writing system, 30,000 years before the invention of the alphabet. They are documents that open up new light on ages in which no one imagined the possibility of obtaining historical documents. They reveal trading systems of exchange not only of edible products but also of women! Other documents report on travels and migrations, and even personal records that include sexual relations. In addition to the great interest and disruptive information capacity of these innovations, they open up new chapters of history of many millennia before what was previously considered the beginning of history and writing. The first attempts at writing are millennia earlier than previously thought. New chapters are being added to the history of humanity. The first results are published in the book *Decoding Prehistoric Art and the Origins of Writing* (Atelier-Edit, 2015).

Conceptual anthropology begins concretely to give its first tangible results as well as awakening considerable interest and provoking innovation.

### SITUATION AND PROSPECTS

How to encourage and facilitate this scientific and intellectual enterprise of vast proportions and predictable resonances? Conceptual anthropology has been born and now grows. So far, activities have been held as private enterprises with no public participation. Institutional intervention could be justified if deemed in the public interest. Certainly, this research brings conceptual values. It is also a source of international relations and cultural development. Is there a public interest in promoting the new discipline? Whatever the case may be, the first task should be to stimulate the dissemination of publications in conceptual anthropology. An important operation would consist in making the publications available in public and university libraries.

No less important is the availability of scholarships for apprentices and students to repopulate the gap due to the brain drain and attract new recruits from different backgrounds. This is, however, an initiative requiring provisions. The operators in the new discipline should have the possibility of survival by applying what they are learning. Needless training potential unemployed. The experience of apprenticeship is, however, open to students of every country in the world.

Tools and research facilities need to be updated. The present base of Capodiponte is particularly favorable thanks to the remarkable concentration of rock art of world renown, that is not only a cultural patrimony, but also a cultural laboratory. It is also important to have here a well-equipped library specializing in prehistoric and tribal art, probably the most complete in Italy.

A major issue concerns the updating of the databank, a basic resource, which for lack of staff cannot keep up with worldwide information and daily document flow. The Atelier database can be a reference tool and contain very important information if constantly updated. It could also become a source of income, providing documentation, information, photographs, and analyses. The delays in the updating of the database curb the use by the public but does not cause delays in research, since the discoveries and innovations are constantly and globally followed, despite the delays in processing them in a database accessible to the public.

Private initiative has worked so far, and can continue to operate. But it does not rule out the participation of public or private bodies, and the ability to give birth to an experimental academic sector based on new criteria that adhere to the conceptual notions of anthropology.

For further information ask: <atelier.etno@gmail.com>

## APPRENTICESHIP IN CONCEPTUAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Atelier Research Center for Conceptual Anthropology is a workshop for research, experiment and debates on the intellectual and spiritual expressions of cultures. It is a meeting place for the arts and sciences. The apprenticeship in conceptual anthropology under the guidance of Prof. Emmanuel Anati, the founder of conceptual anthropology, may last from a minimum of two months to a maximum of one year. It grants the apprentice the title of Research Assistant in Conceptual Anthropology. The apprenticeship is oriented to the acquisition of practical operational abilities and conceptual formation; it includes participation in research, editorial activities, compilation, organization and layout of exhibitions and publications, the arrangement and cataloguing of ethnological collections, and the planning of cultural and scientific projects. It is a way to touch the practical work of producing culture with your hands and your mind. Traditional learning as an accumulation of theoretical notions is enhanced by applying the notions in practical activities, learning to do by doing. During their stay in the Camonica Valley, the student has access to self-catering accommodation on campus, at a student fee. Preference is given to graduates and other seriously motivated young people with knowledge of the English language and operational abilities on a database. Application in an informal letter should specify the motivations and skills of the candidate, and be accompanied by a curriculum vitae, a copy of a record of studies, a copy of an identity card or passport, a recent passport-standard photo; and a letter of presentation or recommenda-

tion from a university professor or a previous employer. Applications should be addressed by email to: <atelier.etno@gmail.com>.

## LEARNING TO BE AN EDITOR

Readers interested in learning editorial work may apply for three months' editorial training at EXPRESSION quarterly journal. Skills required: perfect knowledge of the English language; ability to manage various relevant computer programs; ability in public relations; and a special interest in anthropology and archaeology. For applications or further information, please address a letter expressing your interest and motivation, including a copy of an identity document, to: <atelier.etno@gmail.com>.

## WHAT IS CISENP?

**The International Scientific Commission on Research into the Intellectual and Spiritual Expression of Non-literate Peoples**

*Commission Internationale Scientifique pour la recherche des Expressions Intellectuelles et Spirituelles des Peuples sans Écriture*

*A commission of UISPP: Union Internationale des Sciences Préhistoriques et Protohistoriques*

Visual arts, music, dance, rituals, myths, other traditions and other aspects of the conceptual expressions of humankind reveal the particularities of each society and, at the same time, the common intellectual and spiritual heritage that unites humanity: this is the field of conceptual anthropology. CISENP welcomes people from different disciplines to share their experiences, ideas, and scientific approaches for a better understanding of human creativity and behavior and for a broadminded study of what forms the conceptual roots of the present. Conceptual anthropology is a new academic approach for building up a solid future for the study of man. Archaeology, both prehistoric and historic, needs a constant and open dialogue with other disciplines. The study of man includes anthropology, sociology, psychology, human geography, semiotics, art history, and other disciplines that should unite their efforts. Interdisciplinary cooperation in research is an aim and a habit of both conceptual anthropology and CISENP.

What will the image of prehistoric sciences be in the future? How can we convey to a large public the notions and wisdom accumulated by generations of scholars in the study of the roots of human societies? Understanding the past is basic to building up a future. And not only for that: it is also necessary for understanding the present, our present. Knowing one's roots is the elementary base of understanding history, mythology, habits, and other cultural traditions.

In the tribal world, young people have been and still are being initiated into the knowledge of their past. They have to know their past to become adult members of their society. The study of prehistory in modern society is contributing to a solid base of initiation into our past. It is a source of interest and passion: there is nothing more fascinating than discovering the roots of our behavior, the emotions and passions that have caused the intellectual and spiritual adventures of humankind. This is a message to convey to our society. CISENP invites you to join efforts to develop public awareness, education, engagement, research, for a broader understanding of our past and our present. We can convey this passion only if we share this passion. CISENP has members from all over the world; they meet at the CISENP sessions taking place at the UISPP congresses and on the occasions of thematic conferences. CISENP is a partner in the editorial project of *EXPRESSION* quarterly journal, which is distributed to subscribers; members of CISENP receive this journal free.

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**UISPP CONGRESS 1 – 6 September 2020**

*CISENP: Commission Internationale Scientifique ‘Les expressions intellectuelles et spirituelles des peuples sans écriture’*

CISENP: International Scientific Commission on ‘The Intellectual and Spiritual Expression of Non-literate Peoples’ Emmanuel Anati (President)’ *CISENP Commission Scientifique UISPP 20, 2020.*

**Session:**

### **THE INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL EXPRESSIONS OF NON-LITERATE PEOPLES**

The visual arts, music, dance, rituals, myths, traditions and other aspects of the human conceptual expressions, reveal the peculiarities of each society and, at the same time, the common intellectual and spiritual heritage that unites humanity. The CISENP (International Committee on the Intellectual and Spiritual Expression of Non-literate Peoples) is conveying its session at the forthcoming UISPP Congress 2020. As in previous occasions, colleagues from various disciplines are invited to share experience, ideas and scientific approaches for a better understanding of the human creativity and behavior, for a broad-minded study and understanding of the past.

Prehistoric archaeology is in urgent need of this new landscape of “Conceptual Anthropology”, for a step forward. It is a new academic approach for building up a solid future for the study of man. Archaeology, both prehistoric and historic, needs a constant and open dialogue with other disciplines. The study of man includes anthropology, sociology, psychology, human geography, semiotics, art history, and other disciplines that have to join efforts. This is the aim of Conceptual Anthropology.

What is to be the image of prehistoric sciences in the future? How can we convey to a large public the notions and wisdom accumulated in the study of the roots? Understanding the past is necessary to build a future. And not only:

it is necessary to understand the present, our present. The knowledge of the roots is the elementary base of culture. Even in the tribal world young people are being initiated to the knowledge of their past. The study of prehistory has to awaken interest and passion in the public: there is nothing more fascinating than discovering the background of human behavior, the emotions and passions that have caused the intellectual and spiritual adventures of humankind. This is the message that we can convey to our society. Let us join efforts to develop public awareness, education, formation, engagement, research, for a broader understanding of our past and our present. We can convey this passion only if we have this passion. You are welcome to join.

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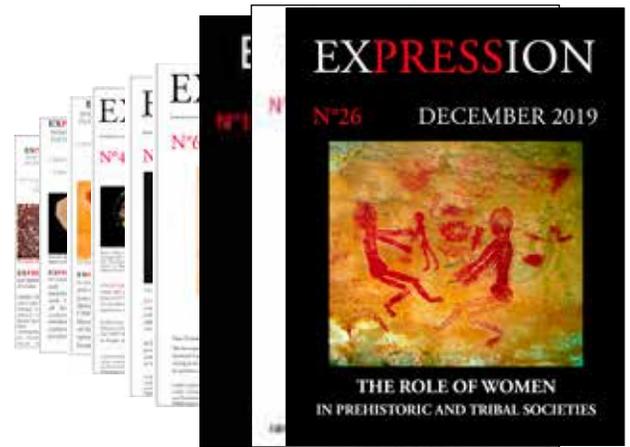
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**NUMBER OF AUTHORS PER COUNTRY**  
**VOLUMES 1 - 26**  
**215 AUTHORS from 41 COUNTRIES**

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF AUTHORS	COUNTRY	NUMBER OF AUTHORS
Argentina	7	Kosovo	1
Armenia	3	Malta	1
Australia	9	Mexico	4
Austria	3	Morocco	1
Belgium	6	Namibia	1
Botswana	1	Netherlands	1
Brazil	10	Norway	2
Bulgaria	1	Poland	2
Canada	5	Portugal	8
China	29	Russia	4
Colombia	1	Saudi Arabia	1
Denmark	2	South Africa	4
France	12	Spain	8
Germany	1	Sri Lanka	5
Hungary	1	Sweden	1
Israel	3	Switzerland	4
India	10	Tunisia	1
Italy	14	UK	10
Japan	1	Ukraine	4
Jordan	1	USA	16
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# EXPRESSION

N°26 December 2019



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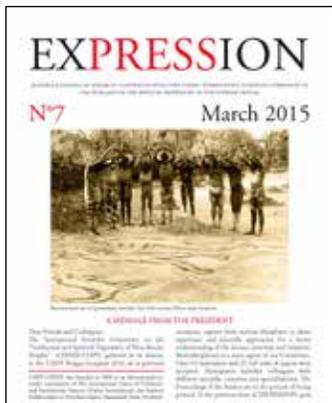


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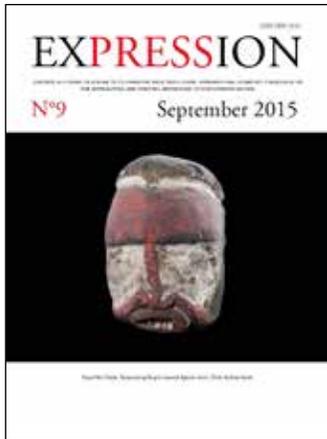


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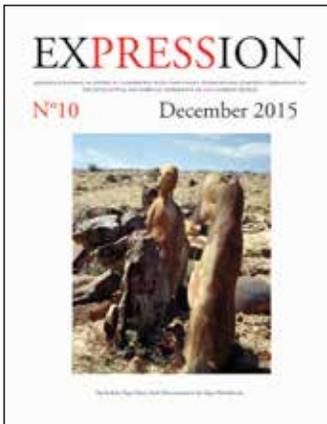
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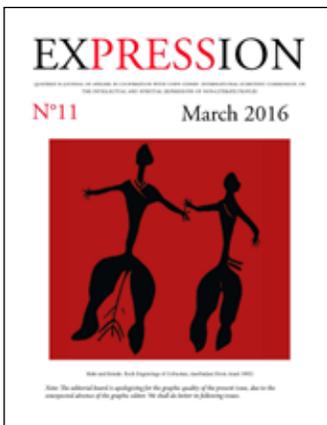


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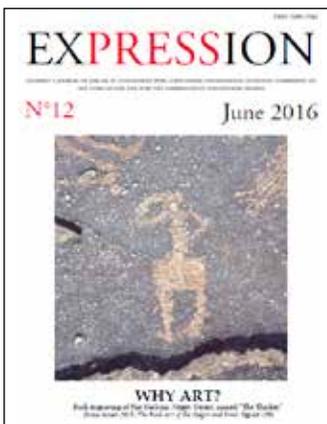


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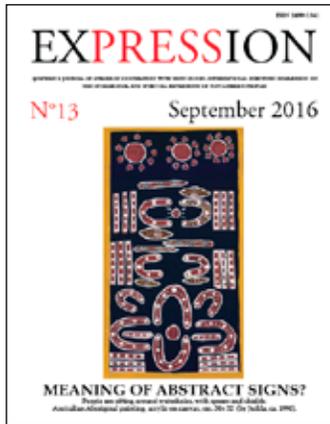


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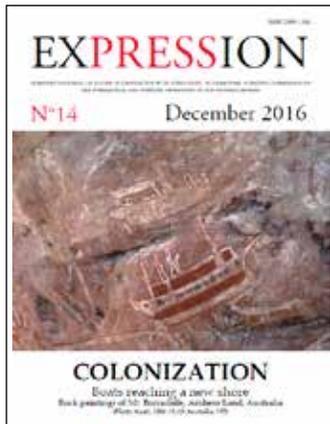


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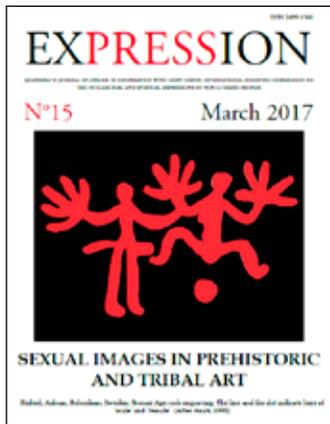


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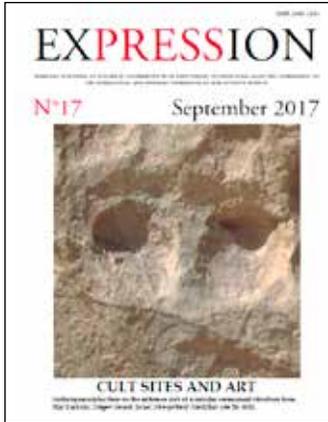


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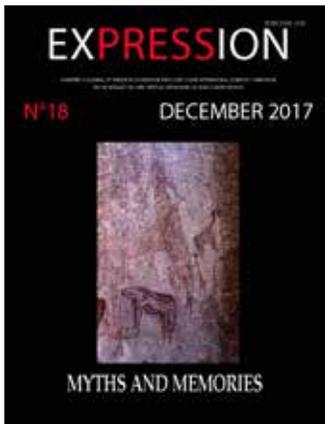


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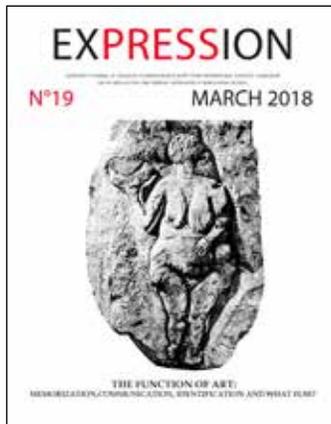


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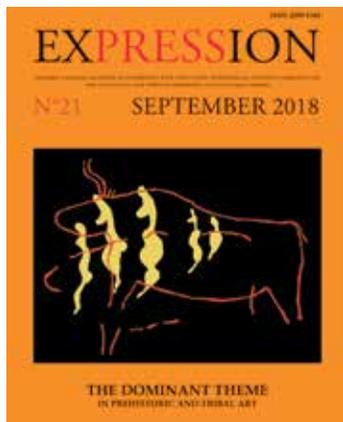
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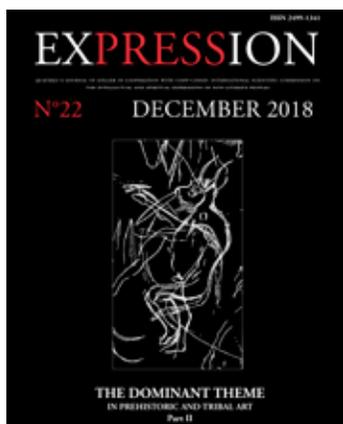


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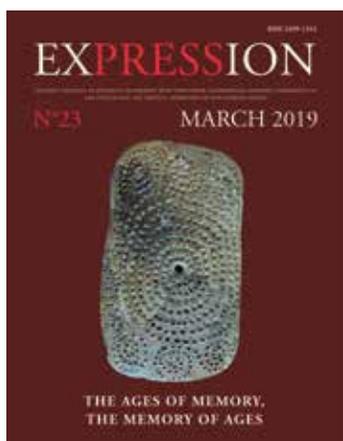


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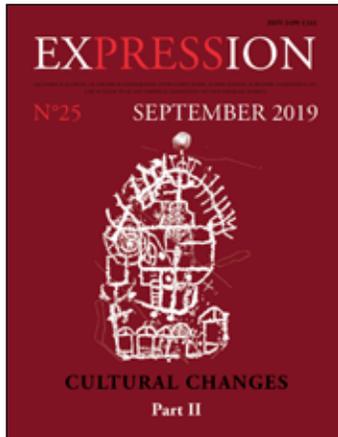


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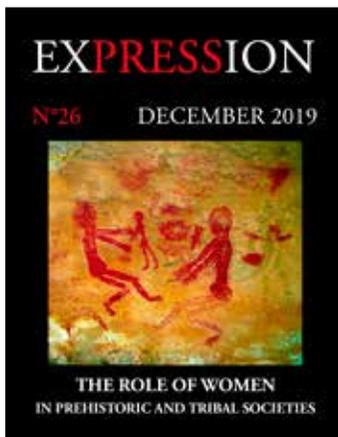


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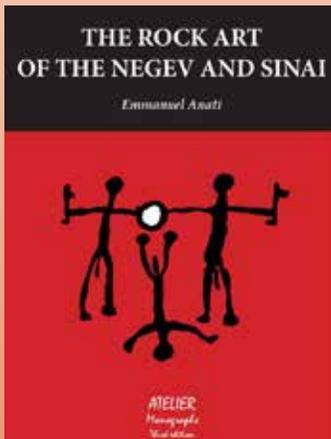
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# ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

Atelier is pleased to present

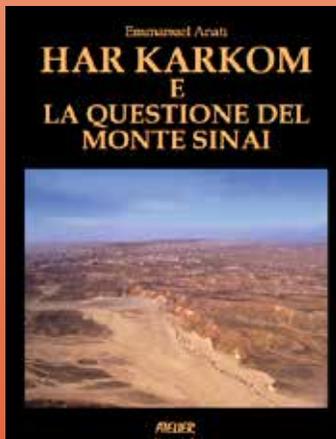
## ***ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE DESERT EXODUS: NEW DISCOVERIES RELATED TO BIBLICAL ARCHEOLOGY***

From excavations and explorations in the deserts that separate the land of Canaan from Egypt, Emmanuel Anati, the scholar who for half a century is exploring these deserts, sums up new discoveries in the following volumes. Richly illustrated books bring new light on the events that inspired the Biblical narrative.



Anati, E., 2015, *The Rock Art of the Negev and Sinai*, Third English edition, Capodiponte (Atelier), 248 pp.248; 196 ill., €20,00

The book deals with a new theme of Neareastern archeology: the rock art of the Negev and Sinai. It presents new discoveries and reconsiders contents and assumptions of previous articles and of a book by the same author that dates back to 1979. The richly illustrated book is offering a new vision of this immense archive engraved and painted on rocks that reveals events and beliefs of the desert. The rock art of the Negev and Sinai illustrates stories and customs of the Sinai Peninsula over the past 10,000 years. Some depictions of the Bronze Age may refer to people mentioned in the Pentateuch. Others, of Roman-Byzantine times, illustrate life and customs from the age of early spread of Christianity.



Anati, E., 2016: *Har Karkom e la questione del Monte Sinai* (*Har Karkom and the Question of Mount Sinai*), Italian edition

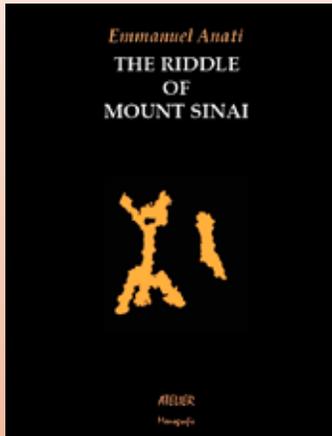
Capodiponte (Atelier), pp 220; 138 ill., €30,00

The findings of shrines and encampments of the Bronze Age at Har Karkom, a mountain located in one of the driest places and inhospitable parts of the Negev desert, in the north of the Sinai Peninsula, arouses a global debate on the hypothesis that this mountain can identify with the biblical Mount Sinai. The book presents a summary of the discoveries; it calls into question previous assumptions about the reliability of the Exodus Biblical narrative, both on the location of the mythical Mount Sinai, and on the chronological discrepancies proposed by various researchers. The book is richly documented by photographs, maps and other illustrations, it updates on recent discoveries, analyzing their possible historical significance, suggesting a new vision of the events narrated in the Bible.

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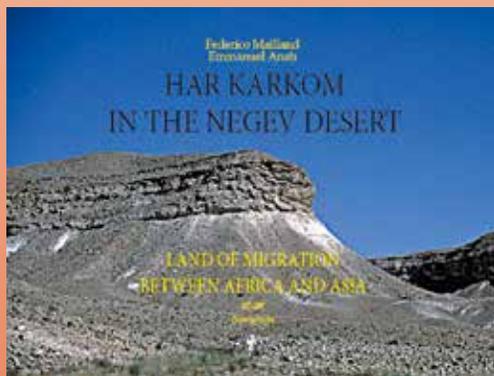
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Anati, E. 2017, *The Riddle of Mount Sinai*, Second English Edition  
Capo di Ponte (Atelier), 260 pp. 141 pls. € 40

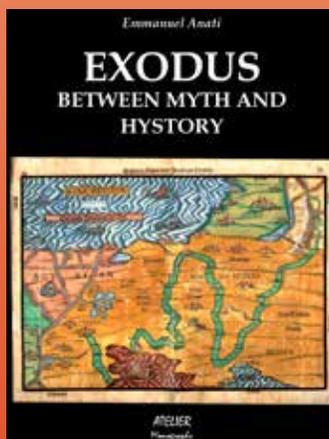
What is the true story behind the biblical narration of Exodus? The discoveries of the Italian archaeological expedition at Har Karkom, in the Negev Desert, tell the hitherto unknown story of the sacred mountain in the heart of the desert of Exodus, reflecting surprising similarities to the events and conditions described to us, albeit in mythicised form, in the Old Testament. The mountain was a paramount cult site and the archaeological discoveries go far beyond the expectations. This well documented volume also helps to clarify a major question: to what extent may we consider the biblical narration as a source of historical documentation.



Anati, E.; Maillard F., 2018, *Har Karkom in the Negev Desert. Raw Material for a Museum on Two Million Years of Human Presence*

Capo di Ponte (Atelier), 130 pp., 534 pls., € 110, English Edition

A mountain located in the land-bridge between Africa and the rest of the world yielded traces of ages of human presence ever since the first steps of the human ancestors out of Africa. The archeological discoveries tell us of two million years, from the earliest stations of archaic Pebble Culture, to recent Bedouin camping sites. The site became a holy mountain with shrines and other cult structures already in the Paleolithic; it developed into an immense cult site in the Bronze Age, likely to be the biblical Mount Sinai. The present book is displaying the results of over 30 years of fieldwork, the raw material of the sequence of ages, for a museum on Har Karkom in the Negev Desert, presenting the story of humankind as concentrated in a mountain of a few square miles in the middle of one of the most arid and nowadays most inhospitable spots in the Near East.



Anati, E., 2018: *Exodus Between Myth and History*, English edition

Capodiponte (Atelier) pp. 388; 138 pls., Analytical Appendix., € 40,00

Different opinions divided the academic world about the historic reliability of the biblical narrative of Exodus. The events in Egypt, the wanderings in the desert under the leadership of Moses and the events at the foot of Mount Sinai are they based on facts or are they just legend? Broad and systematic explorations on the ground and new archaeological discoveries open up the possibility of tracing back the geographical and environmental context, by providing elements that bring new insight on the historical roots of this magnificent epic passed down from the Bible.

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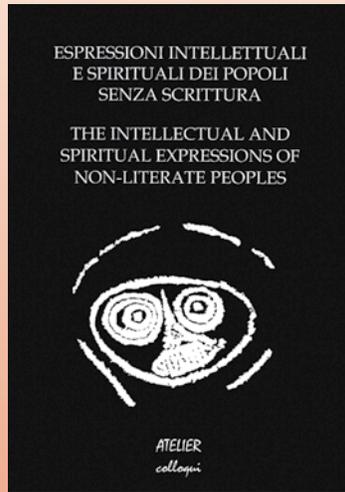
# ATELIER' PUBLICATIONS

## colloqui



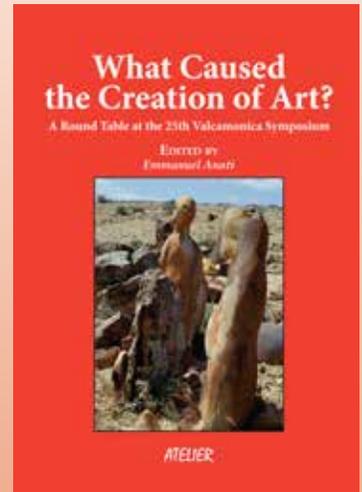
### Il segni originari dell'arte (In Italian)

Proceedings of the Colloquium held at the University of Urbino in 2010. Essays by nine authors who deal with the theme seen from various disciplines: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art History, Semiotics, Psychology, Psychoanalysis, Sociology.



### Espressioni intellettuali dei popoli senza scrittura (In Italian, English, French)

Proceedings of the Colloquium organized in Valcamonica by the International Union of Prehistoric Sciences in 2012. Essays by 30 authors from 11 countries on the intellectual expressions of the primary societies.



**What Caused the Creation of art? A Round Table at the 25th Valcamonica Symposium**  
What caused the creation of art? People from different disciplines and different cultural backgrounds present contrasting views. And yet, the same question has bothered thinkers for generation



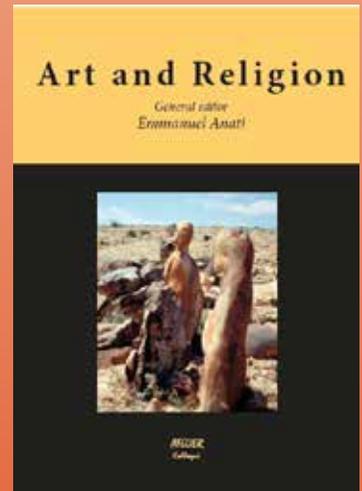
### Sogno e memoria: Per una psicoanalisi della Preistoria (In Italian)

A series of papers presented at Congresses of Sociology, Psychology and Psychoanalysis concern. The analysis of human behavior and of graphic art externalizations is opening new perspectives to the social sciences and multidisciplinary cooperation.



### Semiotica dell'arte preistorica (In Italian)

The conceptual meaning of the forms, the metamorphosis of shapes into sounds, sounds in forms, ideas into images, thoughts in words, it is the very basis of identity of the intellectual being, of 'Homo intellectualis'. This mechanism stimulated, over the years, some of the author's papers and lectures in congresses and conferences of semiotics, sociology and psychology.



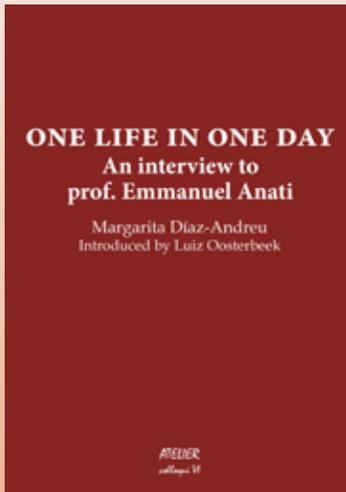
### Art and Religion

What is the role of religion, magic and witchcraft in prehistoric and tribal art? The intellectual and spiritual motivations of art produced various theories since the first attempts to explain prehistoric art over a century ago. Recent research is revealing more complex conceptual connections. In this book, authors of different backgrounds and countries, from four continents, present examples of specific aspects, providing first-hand data.

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# ATELIER' PUBLICATIONS

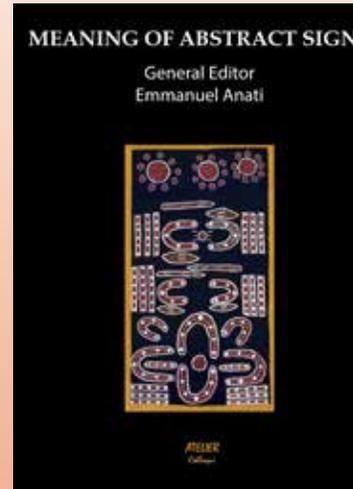
## colloqui



### One Life in One Day.

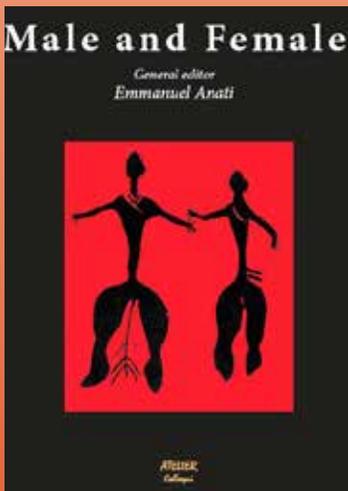
#### An interview to prof. Emmanuel Anati

In the gardens of the campus of Burgos University, while delegates were moving from sessions and lectures to coffee breaks and back, Margarita Díaz-Andreu recorded, for hours, the words of Professor Emmanuel Anati. It was the 5th of September 2014 and when the electric lights of the evening replaced the sunlight, a life-long story was drafted. It concerned just one aspect of Anati's life, that of his experiences as a scholar in the human sciences.



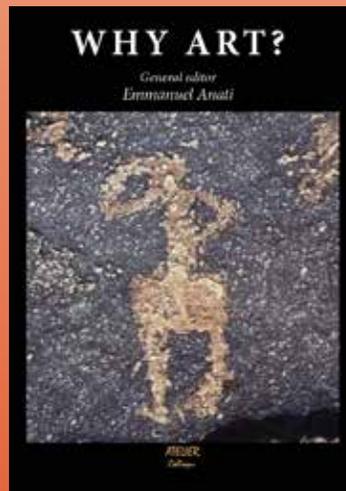
### Meaning of Abstract Signs

The clan was planning a fight against another clan that had abused hospitality hunting kangaroos in a reserved ground. The painter recorded the gathering of the elders to decide the expelling of the guest clan. He represented the elders and the warriors by standard signs. The art-dealer sold the painting as an "Aboriginal abstract composition". The meaning came from the people of the clan who saw the painting explaining the recorded event. Other examples and studies attempt at defining the meaning of abstract signs.



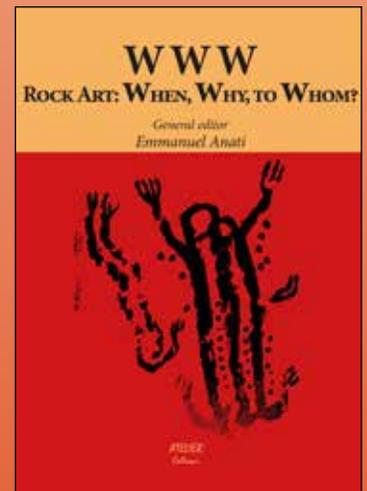
### Male and Female

The book includes papers of 20 authors from five continents. It considers human representations in prehistoric and tribal art presenting a broad landscape of different views and cases. In each age and culture a specific choice is emerging in the visual arts, between preferring male or female images, and between having or not the human figure as the main concern. The book presents different cases and views from experts of five continents.



### Why Art

The volume presents a search of contents by scholars from different continents with different experiences. Prehistoric art is like the literature of more recent times, some depictions may concern science, others religion, some may be school textbooks and others fiction. The decoding of prehistoric art helps to approach the understanding of contents and motivations



### WWW - Rock Art:

#### When, Why and to Whom

How come that Rock art is widespread in five continents? Some sites, in South Africa, Australia or Brazil, count well over one million figures. They were produced over centuries and millennia. What made generations persist in this tradition of marking the stone surfaces with the records of their minds? Why did they invest on it such immense time and energy?

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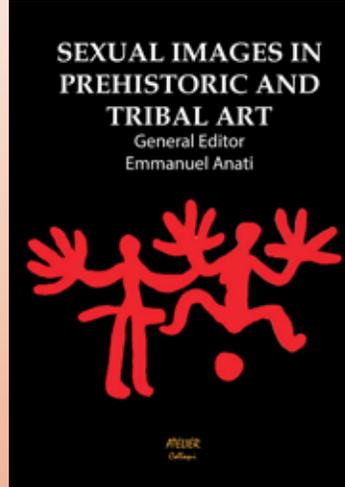
# ATELIER' PUBLICATIONS

## Colloqui



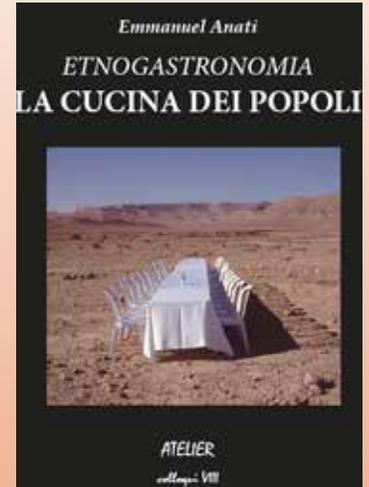
### Colonization

From an original land of origins, likely to have been in Africa, the ancestors of humankind colonized all corners of the globe. Other primates still survive in their limited habitat; humans live in the equatorial regions as well as near the Arctic pole. How did such colonization take place? Authors from five continents replied to this question: a selection of their papers appears in this volume.



### Sexual Images in Prehistoric and Tribal Art

Since the earliest figurative art, sex appears to be a theme of primary concern in every corner of the world. Why were such depictions made? In some cases oral traditions allow us to identify the cause or the inspiration. Can we trace back the stories behind the images? Sharing knowledge is favoring an overview on images, myths, rituals and customs related to sex, in prehistoric and tribal art.



### Etnogastronomia - La cucina dei popoli (In Italian)

Tra le 10.000 popolazioni che vivono negli oltre 200 Paesi del pianeta Terra, abbiamo scelto le cucine di undici punti del globo, descrivendole nelle loro caratteristiche essenziali, fornendo ricette accettabili dal gusto occidentale, e realizzabili con prodotti facilmente reperibili. Capire il sapore del diverso, è saper apprezzare non solo i cibi, ma anche i sorrisi dei popoli.

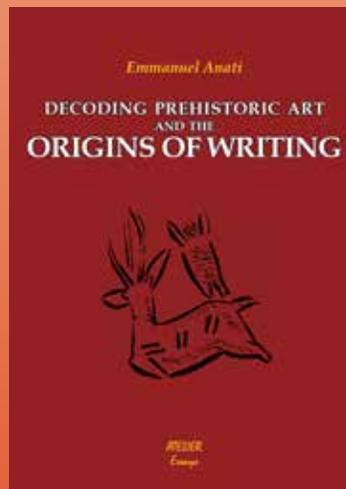
# ATELIER' PUBLICATIONS

## Essays



### Nascere e crescere da nomadi. La relazione madre-figli nelle società primarie (in Italian)

A study of constants and variants between human societies of hunters-gatherers and urban societies in the mother-child relationship reveals archetypes and variants. The mother-child relationship is the backbone of all species of mammals and acquires special rules in primates.



### Decoding Prehistoric Art and the Origins of Writing

This text examines the cognitive process that led to the invention of writing and highlights constants of memorization and associative synthesis held in the mind of *Homo sapiens* for thousands of years. Some examples of decoding prehistoric art give a new vision for the beginning of writing.



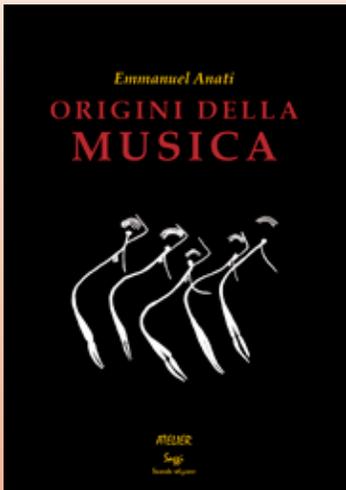
### Ordine e Caos nelle società primarie. Uno studio sugli aborigeni australiani. (in Italian)

Order and chaos are compared as a principle of the binary concept that characterizes the search for an elementary logic of what man is able to hypothesize about the behavior of the world around him. To what extent does the order of nature determine social order in primary societies?

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# ATELIER's PUBLICATIONS

## Essays



### Origini della Musica (in Italian)

How and why did music originate? What function did it hold for the individual and for society? The book presents the oldest documentation of prehistoric art and archeology on the presence of music, dance and musical instruments. The text is accompanied by figures of the oldest musical instruments known to date and images depicting music and dance.



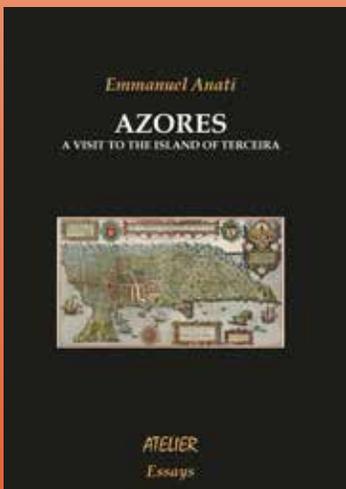
### Iniziazione e riti di passaggio (in Italian)

What are the origins of baptism, circumcision, marriage and burial? The practices of initiation and rites of passage of certain Aboriginal clans of Arnhem Land, Australia, reveal the archetypes of accepted practices which are still common to many peoples of the world. The ritual has the dual role of educating and socializing. It has maintained stable their life of clans for millennia, serving as the glue between individual and group.



### Chi sei? Chi sono? Alla ricerca dell'identità (in Italian)

The problems arising from the search for identity begin in the infant and accompany the human being to the last breath. Defining the identity of the person, of the nation or "race", concerns all people from the Early Hunters to the most advanced urban, literate cultures. The present study its proposing a historical dimension to an archetype of the cognitive system. When does the need to define the identity start, and why?



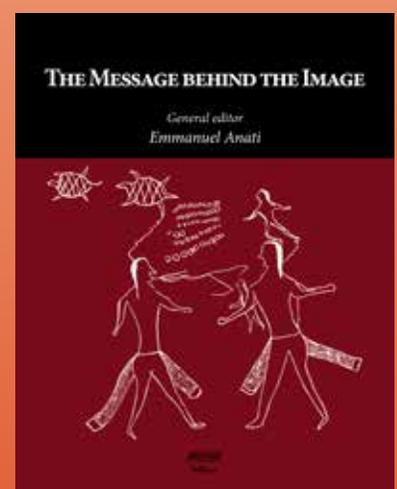
### Azores: a Visit to the Island of Terceira

When did man first arrive to the Azores islands? The Portuguese colonization in the 15th century marked the beginning of the official history. Is there a history before this history? The controversy, between the traditional history and the advocates of a previous human presence, finds partial solutions in the dating and decoding of traces indicating ancient human presence.



### Comunicare per esistere (in Italian)

This text, inspired by travel notes of about 40 years ago, seems now to refer to prehistory. Aboriginal people have made a jump of millennia in two generations. Today they speak English, live in houses, drive cars and use the shotgun. Their lives changed since the 70s of the last century.



### The message behind the image

Prehistoric and tribal people have left behind millions of images, in Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania. Was their purpose just that of embellishing rock surfaces? What pushed people from all over the world to record their memories throughout the ages? This immense heritage, whether intentional or not, is full of messages to be read and understood.

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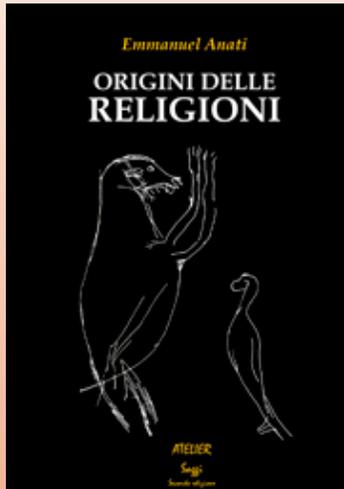
# ATELIER' PUBLICATIONS

## Essays



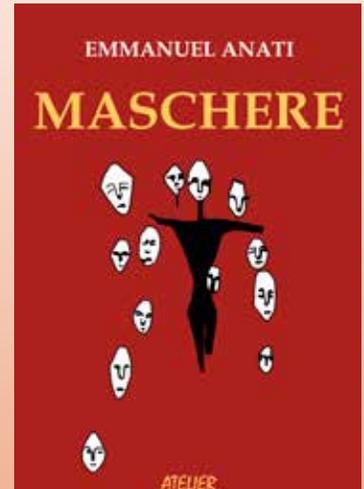
**Mito tra utopia e verità**  
(in Italian)

How do myths originate? The production of myths proves to be a constant of the cognitive process of all human societies. Parameters of this process are examined: the roots of a distant memory, the itineraries of idealization, sublimation and structuring. Similar myths from different cultures reveal recurring conceptual criteria. From the beginning man feeds the myth and the myth feeds the man. Myths feed myths.



**Origini delle religioni**  
(in Italian)

How and when did religions originate? The study of prehistoric art is bringing a revolution to our knowledge of the origins of religious thought. Rock art sites have held for millennia the function of places of worship and tribal identity, serving as archives of myths, beliefs and rituals. Visual art, however, is not the oldest evidence of the presence of religion. Burial customs and other material traces are bringing us further back to the origins of religious behaviour.



**Maschere**  
(in Italian)

What is behind the mask? The mask can hide the identity, but can also reveal an identity submerged, both as an object-mask or a conceptual-mask. Going back to the roots, an aspect of the cognitive process of the mask awakens questions on the comparison of human tendencies, between globalization and individualism. Tracing the history of the mask reveals recurring phenomena of man's relationship with his own identity.



**Guardare l'invisibile.**  
**Religione, miti e spiriti**  
**degli aborigeni australiani.**  
(in Italian)

Some scholars in the history of religions affirm that religion was born in the Neolithic age. People coming directly from the Paleolithic bluntly contradicts this preconception.

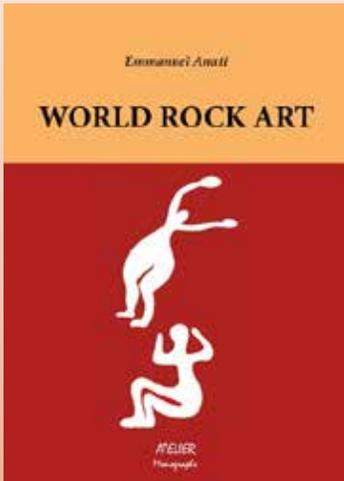


**Amore e sessualità**  
(In Italian)

Love and sexuality, a theme of all lives and many books, is considered under the aspect of conceptual anthropology. Biological impulses, cultural rules and individual feelings meet in different cultures, in different formulas and lead to a vision of how they work and interact socially, psychologically and emotionally on the human being and on the social context.

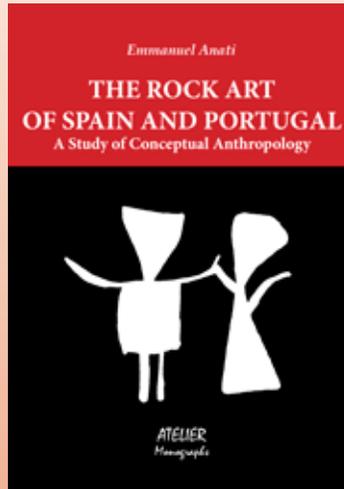
# ATELIER'S PUBLICATIONS

## Monographs



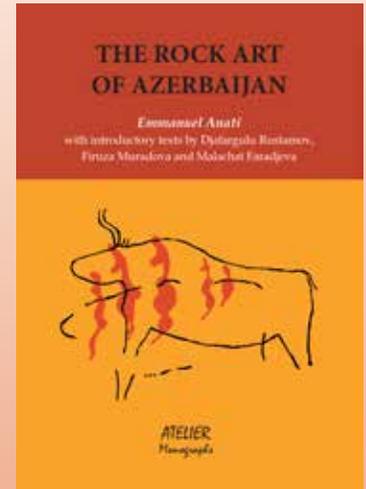
### World Rock Art

This book is a fundamental introduction to rock art studies. It marks the starting point of a new methodology for rock art analysis, based on typology and style, first developed by the author at the Centro camuno di Studi Preistorici, Capo di Ponte, Brescia, Italy. It can be seen at the beginning of a new discipline, the systematic study of world rock art.



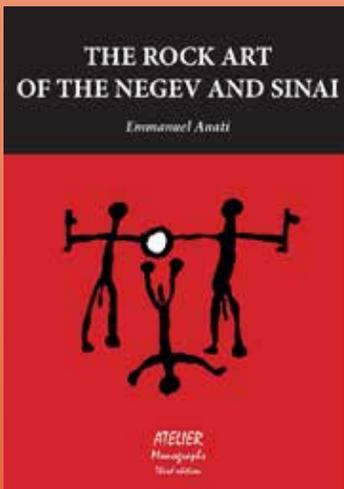
### The Rock Art of Spain and Portugal

An analytical synthesis of the rock art in the Iberian peninsula from the conceptual anthropology approach. The major concentrations of rock art are considered as expressions of their different cultural and social patterns



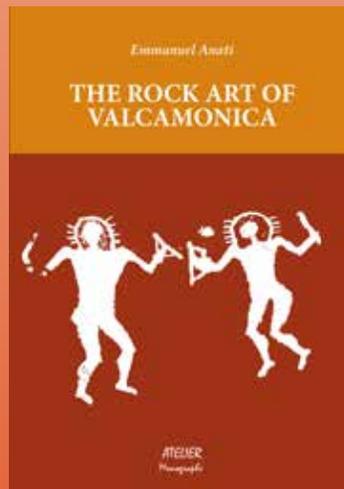
### The Rock art of Azerbaijan

Over the course of centuries, Azerbaijan, was a great centre of rock art. This gateway of Europe, between the Caucasus Mountains and the Caspian Sea, was a major way of migrations from Asia to Europe. Showing influence and connections with both Europe and the Near East, the succession of phases of rock art illustrate the movements of cultures and ideas from Paleolithic to recent times, shedding new light on the early movement of *Homo sapiens*.



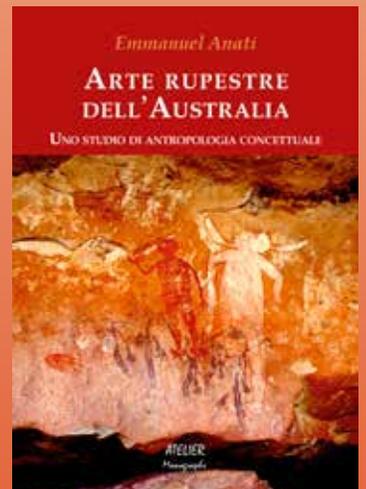
### The Rock Art of the Negev and Sinai

The present volume is concerned with a new theme of archeology and anthropology: the rock art of the Negev and Sinai, which never had before a general analysis in English. It elaborates on articles and a book written in the last 60 years, to produce a synthesis and an overview



### The Rock Art of Valcamonica

Valcamonica, in the Italian Alps, with over 300,000 images engraved on rocks, is the major rock art site in Europe. It is the first 'World Heritage Site' listed by UNESCO in Italy and the first rock art site listed in the world. Its study reveals the largest archive left behind by the ancient inhabitants of Europe

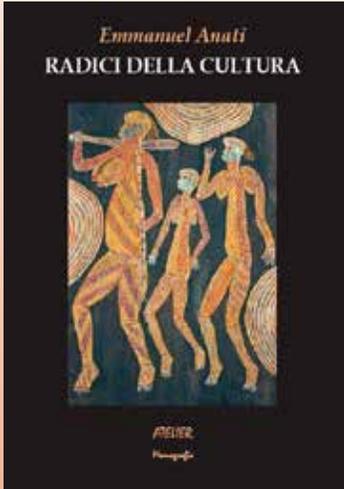


### The Rock Art of Australia

The Australian aborigines until yesterday were hunter-gatherers, creators of visual art according to ancient traditions and beliefs. The rock art tells their story and the history of art of 50,000 years.

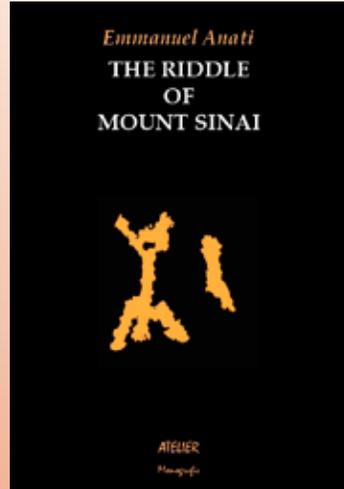
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## Monographs



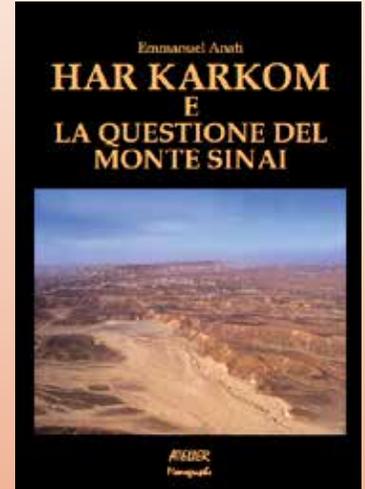
**Radici della cultura**  
(in Italian)

The history of culture is the history which unify the whole humankind. As Yves Coppens wrote in the preface, from the very first flint tool four million years ago to the conquest of space, the human adventure shows an hyperbole, which from the beginning of history, through the ages, builds the reality of present and project us to the future.



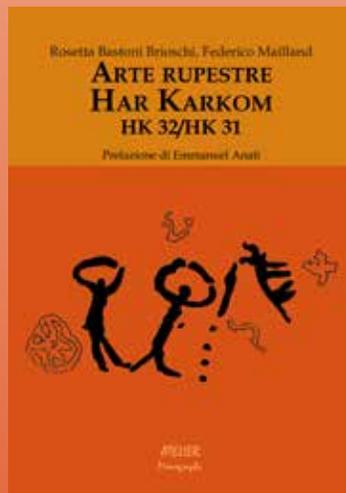
**The Riddle of Mount Sinai**

What is the true story behind the biblical narration of Exodus? The discoveries of the Italian archaeological expedition at Har Karkom, in the Negev Desert, tell the hitherto unknown story of the sacred mountain in the heart of the desert of Exodus, reflecting surprising similarities to the events and conditions described to us, albeit in mythicised form, in the Old Testament.



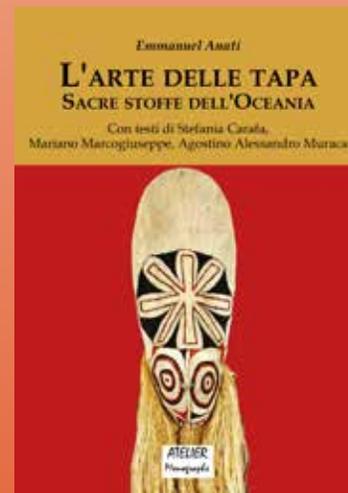
**Har Karkom e la questione del Monte Sinai**  
(in Italian)

The findings of shrines and encampments of the Bronze Age at Har Karkom, a mountain located in one of the driest places and inhospitable parts of the Negev desert, in the north of the Sinai Peninsula, arouses a global debate on the hypothesis that this mountain can be identified with the biblical Mount Sinai.



**Rock Art - Har Karkom**  
**HK 32/HK 31**  
(in Italian)

Within the frame of the Archaeological Italian Expedition in Israel, the present book is a record of rock art in two adjacent sites on the plateau of Har Karkom. The rock art is in the same area with tumuli, altar stones, stone circles and other megalithic structures. Some of the rock engravings are on these monuments. The rock engravings are described and illustrated by numerous photos and tracings.

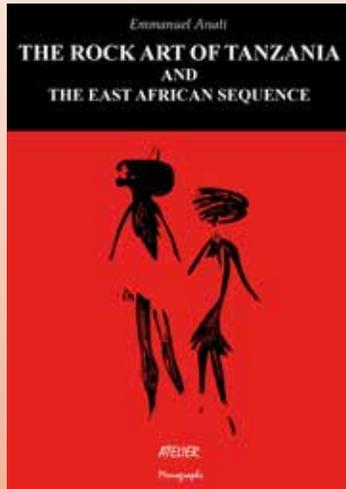


**L'arte delle tapa.**  
**Sacre stoffe dell'Oceania**  
(in Italian)

The tapa is a non-woven fabric, a kind of felt produced from the bark of some species of trees. Their origins are much earlier than the invention of weaving. Their roots go back to the Old Stone Age. Indirect testimony of their antiquity are provided by the discovery of tools used for the manufacture of tapa in archaeological layers and by figures of tapa cloths in the rock art.

# ATELIER'S PUBLICATIONS

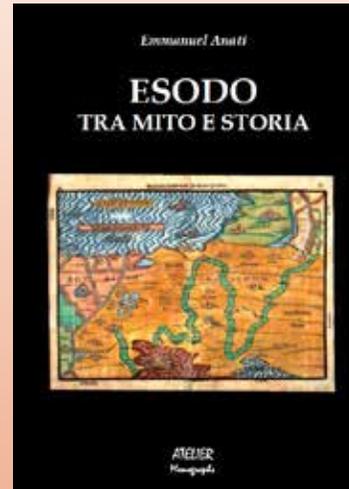
## Monographs



### **The Rock Art of Tanzania and the East African Sequence**

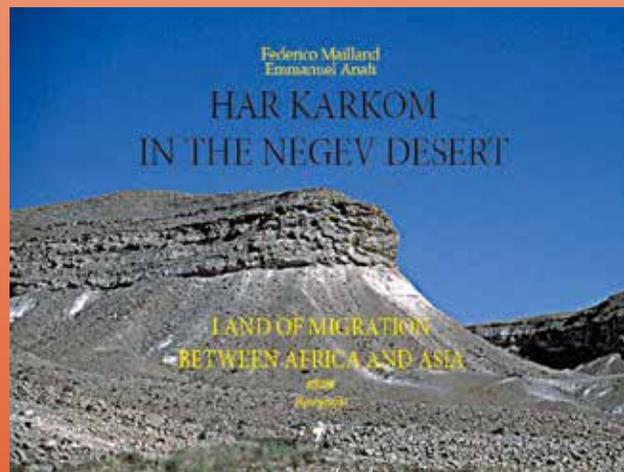
The rock art of Tanzania, in over 200 caves and rock shelters, is presented in this book using the analytical method of Conceptual Anthropology.

Stylistic phases and periods are covering millennia.



### **Exodus Between Myth and History**

The epic of Moses: is it myth or history? The Biblical narrative of the exodus and the revelation of Mount Sinai are a monumental literary work that has been passed down for well over two millennia, after being transmitted orally for centuries. What would have really happened during the Exodus? How did monotheism emerge? Who were the mentioned people of the desert met by the children of Israel? The central episode of the epic is the revelation at Mount Sinai.



### **Har Karkom in the Negev Desert**

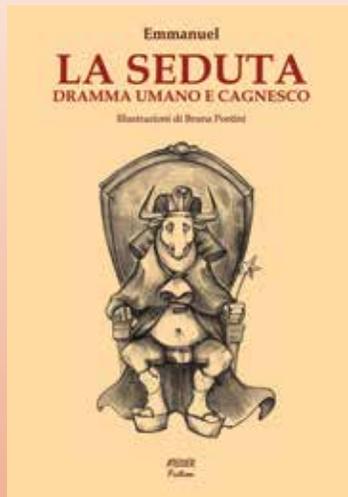
A mountain located in the land-bridge between Africa and the rest of the world yielded traces of ages of human presence ever since the first steps of the human ancestors out of Africa.

The archeological discoveries tell us of two million years, from the earliest stations of archaic Pebble Culture, to recent Bedouin camping sites.

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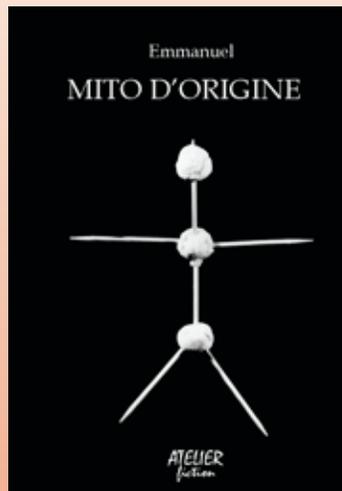
# ATELIER' s PUBLICATIONS

## Fiction



**La Seduta**  
(in Italian)

This work of the author's youth reflects a biting social commentary that after half a century seems to have not lost its charge. It was written in the 60s of the last century, in the climate of postwar youth revolt. It was published for the first time in 1979 in a bi-monthly magazine. It now comes out in a revised edition.



**Mito d'origine**  
**Epoca dei Sogni**  
(in Italian)

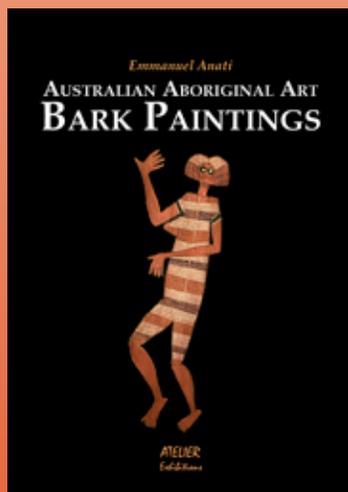
The first works of Atelier Fiction, Mito d'Origine and Epoca dei Sogni, tell stories that at first sight seem to come from another world.

Between reality and dream, realism and myth, symbols and metaphors, they accompany us in the space of flooded memories. Balls and sticks wander, meet and multiply in black space, always accompany the shadows and the lights of thought.

They are works created by the author at a young age now published for the first time, a few decades after since they were first conceived.

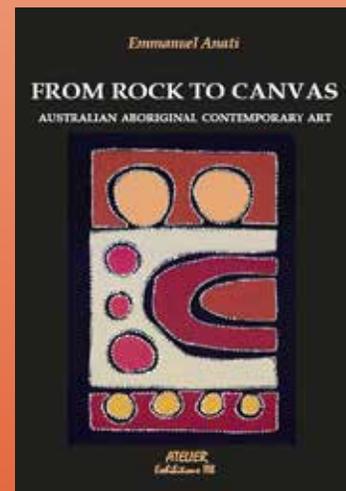


## Exhibitions



**The Art of the Australian Aborigines**  
**Bark Paintings**

Australian Aborigines have produced paintings on tree bark that, in addition to being remarkable artworks, store myths and memories, emotions and human relations. What remains today of authentic bark paintings, made by Aborigines for themselves, is an extremely small group.



**From Rock to Canvas**

**Australian Aboriginal Contemporary Art**  
Turning from the Stone Age to the age of air-conditioning in a generation is an experience which leaves its mark on artistic expression. The canvas paintings made by contemporary Aboriginal artists, whose fathers painted on rocks or tree bark, display a momentous revolution in the spirit of a generation that has leapfrogged millennia.

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