

STONE CANVAS: TOWARDS A BETTER INTEGRATION OF 'ROCK ART' AND 'GRAFFITI' STUDIES IN EGYPT AND SUDAN

Terminology, approaches, and research issues

Cairo, IFAO and RC-PCMA

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Disciplines as broad as the archaeology of Egypt and Nubia, in order to progress, need to develop internal and external communication between various fields of expertise. This conference intends to focus on internal dialogue which may, hopefully, lead to the development of closer relations and cooperation between local archaeological sub-disciplines mainly associated with iconography. Expected outcomes include: defining common ground for research, refining selected terms and definitions, as well as establishing strategies for more extensive incorporation of rock art and graffiti studies into mainstream archaeology.

We invite papers concerning historical rock art (dynastic, Graeco-Roman, Meroitic, Christian, Islamic, modern), as well as presentations dedicated to other pictorial/inscriptional material from these periods. It is expected that the proposed topics will integrate different types of scientific material in order to identify common research problems and some of the ways in which cross-disciplinary studies can be of mutual benefit. We also invite papers on prehistoric and Predynastic rock art and iconography; however these should be oriented towards contextualisation and weaving the imagery into broader archaeological narratives. The proposed papers can refer to one or more of the following topics:

- **Terminology and definitions.** Terminology used in rock art/graffiti studies might sometimes be confusing and some definitions remain vague and intuitive. This concerns not only notions such as “graffiti”, but also, *e.g.*, terms describing techniques of execution. Presentations proposing standardisation, or defining selected terms, are particularly welcomed.
- **Across boundaries.** This topic concerns studies of motifs and related phenomena, which occur in various media at the same time or diachronically. One can indicate many types of motifs (*e.g.* sandals, feet, horned altars, anthropomorphs, boats, etc.) being found on rocks, in temples, or in archaeological material. We invite studies which, in addition to dealing with motif chronology, aim to expand our understanding of such motifs.
- **Do canvas matter?** Focusing too excessively on iconography may, at times, lead to the marginalisation of the surfaces on which it has been created. This is particularly visible in the case of older publications presenting *facsimiles* of rock drawings, graffiti, or inscriptions, as if they had been created on a *tabula rasa*. However, similarly to the images' location, the canvas itself could have been of utmost importance. Moreover, since certain motifs were executed both on rocks and on buildings, one should perhaps reconsider some ontological questions regarding “stone”, “surface”, “theophany”, and “nature”, among many others.
- **Texts and pictures.** One of the most important aspects of Ancient Egyptian culture is that pictures and texts complement and enhance each other, and are fairly inseparable. This is recognised widely in the case of official iconography, but sometimes seems to be forgotten when non-official documents are studied. Papers presenting interrelationships between inscriptions and pictorial elements are thus especially welcomed.
- **Pictures and archaeology.** There is a need of a more thorough contextualisation of rock art and graffiti. In this section we invite papers focusing on the relationship between imagery and other material culture, as well as those analysing pictures within the landscape. Iconography is meaningful, but equally meaningful are the places where it was created. In Egypt and the Sudan it is particularly the “landscape of travel” which can be associated with rock art, graffiti, or inscriptions.

We thus hope that the conference will serve to build bridges between various sub-disciplines as well as emphasize common ground for many research issues. Egypt and the Sudan, with their enormous abundance of pictorial material, seem to be particularly predestined to be studied from varied perspectives and in a multi-disciplinary way.

The conference proceedings is planned to be published by IFAO–PCMA after the conference. Due to a limited publication timeframe, participants are kindly requested to submit their contributions by February 1st, 2020 at the latest.

Submission Guidelines

Abstracts of 200–250 words should be submitted via [this online form](#) by 30th May, 2019. Please include your name, affiliation and email with the abstract. Kindly note that the conference language is English.