

DAKHLEH OASIS

RESEARCH ON PETROGLYPHS, 1998

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The research on petroglyphs in the Dakhleh Oasis, started in 1985/86, was continued in November 1998.¹ As in previous seasons, the research was part of the Dakhleh Oasis Project (D.O.P.) directed by Prof. Anthony J. Mills.² Objectives included exploration of several groups of sandstone hills situated in the eastern part of the oasis, between the area investigated in the previous seasons and the border of the hilly country to the east of the village of Taneida.

¹ Cf. L. Krzyżaniak, *PAM V, Reports 1993* (1994), pp. 97-100 (with earlier references).

² The fieldwork was carried out by Prof. Dr. Lech Krzyżaniak (Poznań Archaeological Museum and Polish Center of Archaeology, Warsaw University) assisted by Ms Berengere de Lavaley and Mr. Benjamin G. Stewart, students from the Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium).

The investigated area is situated mostly on the northern side of the ancient and modern road leading from Dakhleh to Khargeh. The hills, usually occurring in chains, tend to surround flat "basins", partly overgrown with grass. A new phenomenon in this area are farms established by farmers arriving from the Dakhleh Oasis proper.

Methodologically, the fieldwork was no different from what has already been carried out. The expedition operated from the D.O.P. rest house in the village of Beshendi. Leaving the Landrover in the center of a group of hills, the field party surveyed the surrounding slopes, peaks and bottoms in search of petroglyphs. A number of these were found, either engraved or, less often, pecked in the stone.

The season was devoted not so much to recording all the petroglyphs as to completing a general survey while recording only selected items. All of the petroglyphs were photographed in black-and-white and color, and a few were traced and described on catalogue sheets. It is planned to complete recording selected sites in future seasons.

The registered petroglyphs seem to belong to the types which Winkler³ classified and dated as belonging to "Dynastic" and "Arab" times. No petroglyphs of a clearly prehistoric type and chronology, similar to the rock art recorded in the Eastern Dakhleh in previous seasons, were found in the investigated area. As regards the "Dynastic" types, site No. 31/435-P2-3 appears to be of special importance, bringing several groups of figural engravings and hieroglyphic texts [Figs 1-2].

Another site, No. 30/450-A2-1, yielded an interesting engraving of a victorious Amun-Nakht smiting a Libyan warrior [Fig. 3]; a similar scene, but in painted relief, had been found earlier by the D.O.P. project expedition in a temple situated near the village of Beshendi and dated to the late 1st century BC and 1st century AD. However, most of the petroglyphs found in the investigated area are dated to the Arab/Medieval and post-Medieval times [Fig. 4].



Fig. 1. Figural engraving and hieroglyphic text found on a now loose block of stone. Site No. 31/435-P2-3 (Drawing L. Krzyżaniak)

³ H.A. Winkler, *Rock-Drawings of Southern Upper Egypt II*, The Egypt Exploration Society, London 1939.

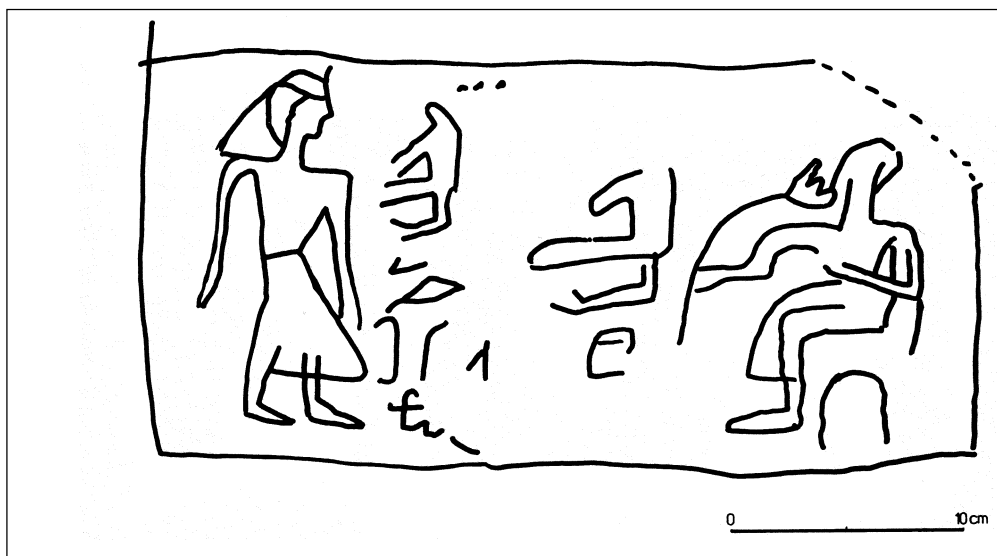


Fig. 2. Figural engravings and hieroglyphic text. Site No. 31/435-P2-3
(Drawing L. Krzyżaniak)

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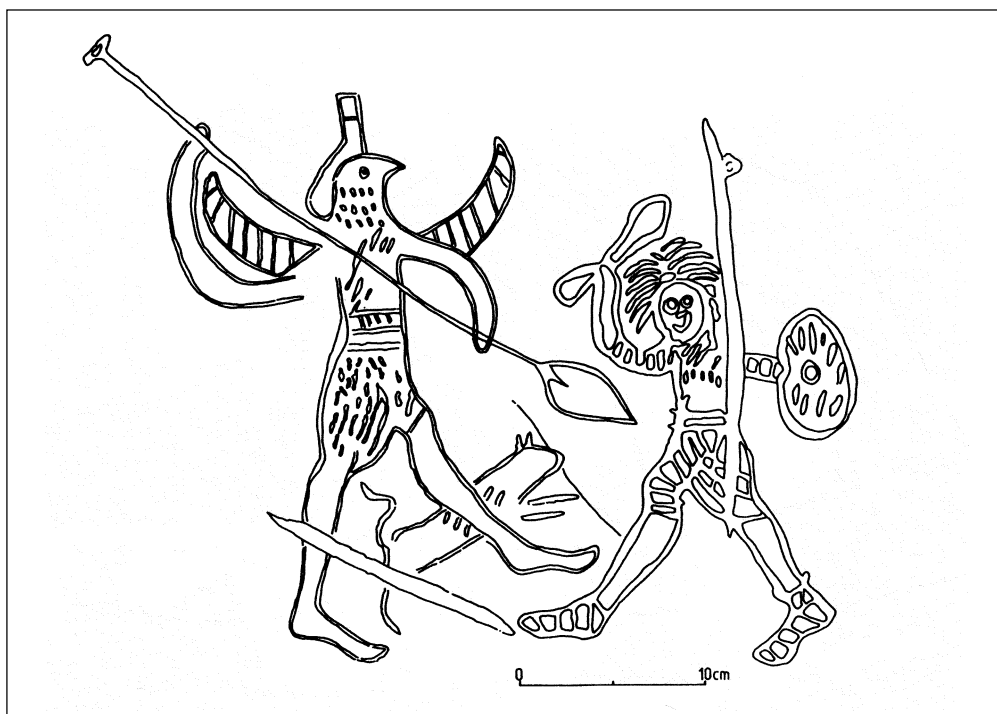


Fig. 3. Engraving of the victorious god Amun-Nakht smiting a Libyan warrior. Site No. 30/450-A2-1
(Drawing L. Krzyżaniak)

As in previous seasons, considerable attention was paid to the condition of these archaeological remains. While tourism on a major scale has not yet become a common phenomenon in the Dakhleh area, it is obvious that some petroglyphs

in the eastern part of the oasis have already been vandalized by humans. The agricultural projects now under way can also turn out to be a risk. A report on this subject has been submitted to the Supreme Council of Antiquities in Cairo.

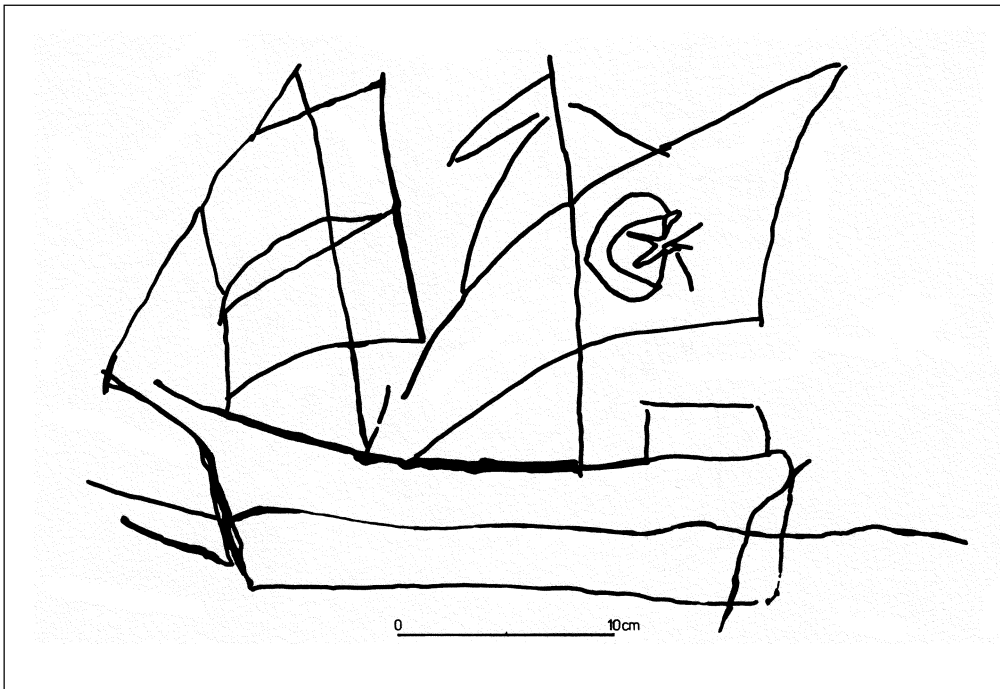


Fig. 4. Engraving of a sailing ship
(Drawing L. Krzyżaniak)