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Dakhleh Oasis: Petroglyph Unit, Rock Art Research, 2007

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DAKHLEH OASIS

PETROGLYPH UNIT, ROCK ART RESEARCH, 2007

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Research on petroglyphs in Dakhleh Oasis was continued between 15 February and 4 March 2007. As in the previous years, the Petroglyph Unit was an integral part of the Dakhleh Oasis Project (D.O.P.), acting on behalf of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw in association with the Poznań Archaeological Museum.¹

1 The fieldwork was carried out by Ewa Kuciewicz and Eliza Jaroni (both Poznań Archaeological Museum), Fred Hardtke (Sydney University) and Prof. Michał Kobusiewicz, Project Director (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poznań Branch). Financial support came from the following institutions: Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw, the Poznań Archaeological Museum and the Patrimonium Foundation in Poznań. Members of the field party wish to express their gratitude to the Director of the Dakhleh Oasis Project, Professor Anthony J. Mills, and to the Director of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, Professor Piotr Bieliński.

PAINTED WADI

Recording rock art sites in the so-called Painted Wadi remained the main objective of the project [Fig. 2]. Documentation in the previous season had covered the central part of the wadi (Kuciewicz, Jaroni, Kobusiewicz 2009), whereas in 2007 a comprehensive survey was undertaken of the northern part, close to the modern road leading from Dakhleh to Khargah.

Fieldwork was confined to an area marked by the following four corner points:
 GPS 1: N25°32'08.1" EO29°09'54.8"
 GPS 2: N25°32'09.2" EO29°09'49.8"
 GPS 3: N25°30'48.2" EO29°09'44.4"
 GPS 4: N25°30'47.9" EO29°09'39.5"

Thorough surveying of this belt, more or less 2 km long and approx. 300 m wide, has



Fig. 1. *Decorated sandals image of Dynastic date (Photo E. Kuciewicz)*



Fig. 2. *The Painted Wadi, view from the south (Photo E. Kuciewicz)*

located 20 sites of rock art. Adding sites recorded last year in the southern and central part of the wadi, this gives a count of 38 rock art sites in the Painted Wadi itself.

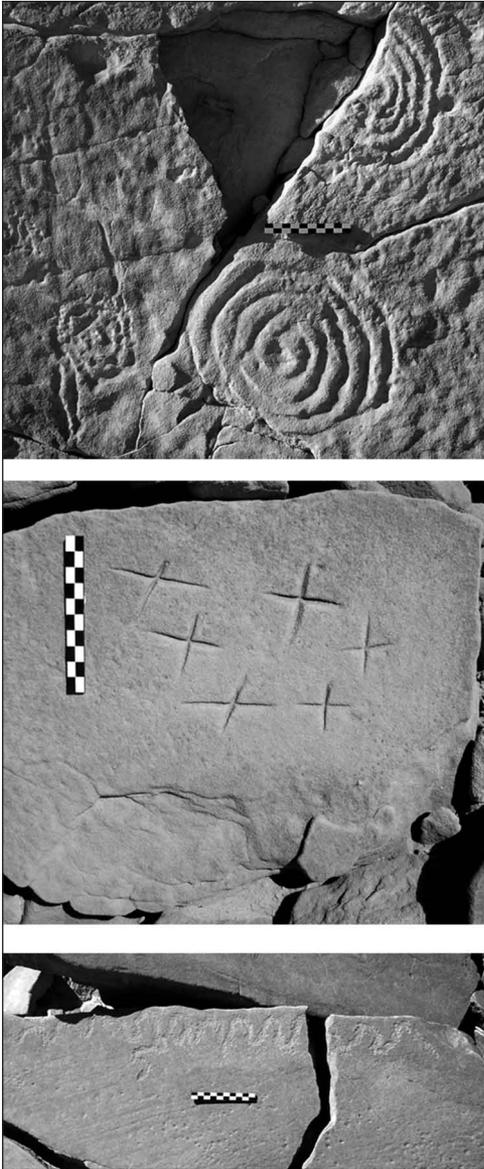


Fig. 3. Isolated graphic signs: spirals, crosses and zigzag lines from the Painted Wadi (Photos E. Kuciewicz)

The character of the sites found this year is apparently somewhat different from what has been recorded in the Painted Wadi so far. The massive panels with elaborate and sophisticated scenes are absent here. Instead, there are simple, individual glyphs, of Dynastic origin in their vast majority [Fig. 1]. Evidently older petroglyphs appear to be rare. Unfortunately, many of the drawings were simple, isolated graphic signs, like lines, crosses or stars [Fig. 3], which cannot be dated even provisionally without additional data.

Moreover, the density of their occurrence, compared to that in the southern part of the wadi, is different. Sections even

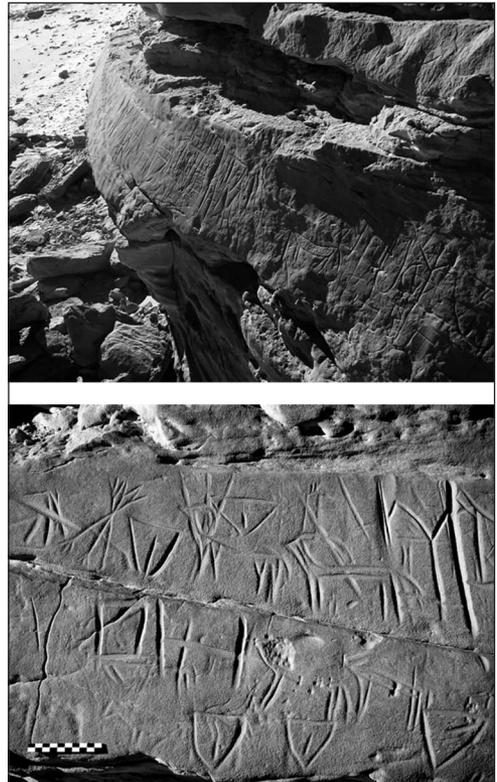


Fig. 4. Glyphs of Dynastic and later date on two hills in the Painted Wadi (Photos E. Kuciewicz)

100 m long were completely devoid of any traces of rock art.

Two hills in the southern part of the surveyed area, close to GPS points 3 and 4, proved exceptional. They are covered with hundreds of glyphs of Dynastic and more recent origin (one with clearly Arabic inscriptions) [Fig. 4]. Massive quantities of potsherds can be found around these two hills.

A functional analysis of the wadi will have to take into account the differences already noted between the two parts of the wadi.

Following with a simultaneous recording of all manifestations of human activity in and around the wadi, the team has noted the presence of some clusters of regular stone structures. These features, which are located solely in the northern part of the wadi, are found not on the top of the hills as observed before, but on the slopes, close to the floor of

the wadi. They are usually crescent-shaped stone arrangements, maybe wind shelters of some kind [Fig. 6], occurring in rows of up to eight units. Regular stone mounds of a diameter of 3–5 m were also found [Fig. 5].



Fig. 5. Stone mound in the Painted Wadi
(Photo E. Kuciewicz)



Fig. 6. Crescent-shaped stone structure in the Painted Wadi
(Photo E. Kuciewicz)

WEST OF THE PAINTED WADI

A cursory survey of the area to the west of the Painted Wadi was aimed at finding rock art and ascertaining its nature. Within the allotted time of seven days, the team covered four squares (total surveyed area equal to one square kilometer). Rock art sites were located, again proving the richness of the region in this kind of remains. The most interesting is a fine panel bearing the image of a female and animals being led to her [Fig. 7].

Patina dating of this panel is planned for the coming season.

Dynastic rock art was notably absent here with only one image of cattle. The normally ubiquitous pubic triangles noted frequently in the main part of the Painted Wadi to the east were completely absent here.

A number of semi intact ceramic vessels and sherd deposits were found and their locations recorded.

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The experiment with ochre used for coloring the petroglyphs has been continued. Digital photos using an IFRAO scale were taken of scenes treated thus in

2003. They will now be compared, using special computer software, with data obtained in previous seasons (Krzyżaniak 2004: 189).



Fig. 7. Panel with female figure and procession of animals found west of the Painted Wadi (Photo E. Kuciewicz)

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