

Andrzej Rozwadowski, Ewa Kuciewicz

Rock Art Research in the Fourth Cataract Region, Season 2009

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ROCK ART RESEARCH IN THE FOURTH CATARACT REGION SEASON 2009

Ewa Kuciewicz,¹ Andrzej Rozwadowski²

¹ Institute of Archaeology, Jagiellonian University,

² Institute of Eastern Studies, Adam Mickiewicz University

Abstract: The construction of the Merowe Dam in the Fourth Nile Cataract region and the resultant rising water level have threatened the archaeological remains in the area. In an effort to protect the cultural heritage of Sudan, numerous archaeological missions have concentrated their efforts on these remains. Rock art research has been part of the fieldwork undertaken in the eastern part of the PCMA concession on the Fourth Cataract. The main objective of the season in 2009 was to complete the recording of previously observed rock art sites and to select and transport blocks of stone with petroglyphs for safekeeping. Some new rock art sites were also located.

Keywords: rock art, petroglyphs, Fourth Cataract, Sudan, cow

The fieldwork in the eastern part of the PCMA concession at the Fourth Cataract (for a general report, see Chłodnicki 2012, in this volume) also included a rock art survey aimed at completing the recording of previously noted rock art sites, and selecting and transporting stone blocks with petroglyphs for safekeeping as part of the project for protecting the cultural heritage of Sudan. Some new rock art sites were also located. Previous surveys by Polish teams in the Fourth Cataract region have been recorded in Chłodnicki *et alii* 2007; Chłodnicki *et alii* 2010; for rock art surveys made in other concession within the framework of the Merowe Dam salvage project, see, e.g., Kleinitz 2004: 11–16; Kleinitz, Ollson 2005: 32–39; Kleinitz, Koenitz 2006: 34–42.

Two of the richest rock art sites recorded to date, Gamamiya 67 and Keheili 5 (Jaroni, Kuciewicz 2010: 394–399), received the most attention this season in terms of additional photographs and tracings. Silicon casts were made of chosen petroglyphs to allow precise copies to be made [*Fig. 1*; see also above, *Fig. 1* on 379]. Much attention was devoted also to selection of blocks with petroglyphs for moving to safe ground. These blocks of stone were moved first to the mission's quarters and prepared for further transport to the NCAM stores.

The reconnaissance and recording of two extensive areas was completed, requiring considerable input of both time and physical effort. The first of these was the Gebel Gurgurib region, which

is a large stone terrace cut by many wadis (GPS coordinates: N 19° 28' 59.8", E 33° 00' 36.1"). Fieldwork there started in 2006 (Kuciewicz 2008: 458; also Piasecki 2008: 452–456), continued in 2007 (Jaroni, Kuciewicz 2010: 378) and was completed this year. Not all of the sites and petroglyphs here have been recorded, but the sample taken appears to be representative. The two most impressive scenes recorded this year included two pairs of well executed long horned bovids [Fig. 3, top].

The second area of interest has been designated as Gamamiya 13 (or Wadi el-Khineish) (GPS coordinates: N 19° 19' 13.8", E 32° 48' 15.6"), a sandstone outcrop a couple of kilometers long (Kuciewicz 2008: 457). Its horizontal summit is covered by a massive amount of scenes and single depictions. This year it was possible to outline and partly record its full extent [Fig. 2].



*Fig. 1. Preparing a silicon cast from a petroglyph
(Photo E. Kuciewicz)*



*Fig. 2. Sandstone outcrop at Gamamiya 13
(Photo E. Kuciewicz)*

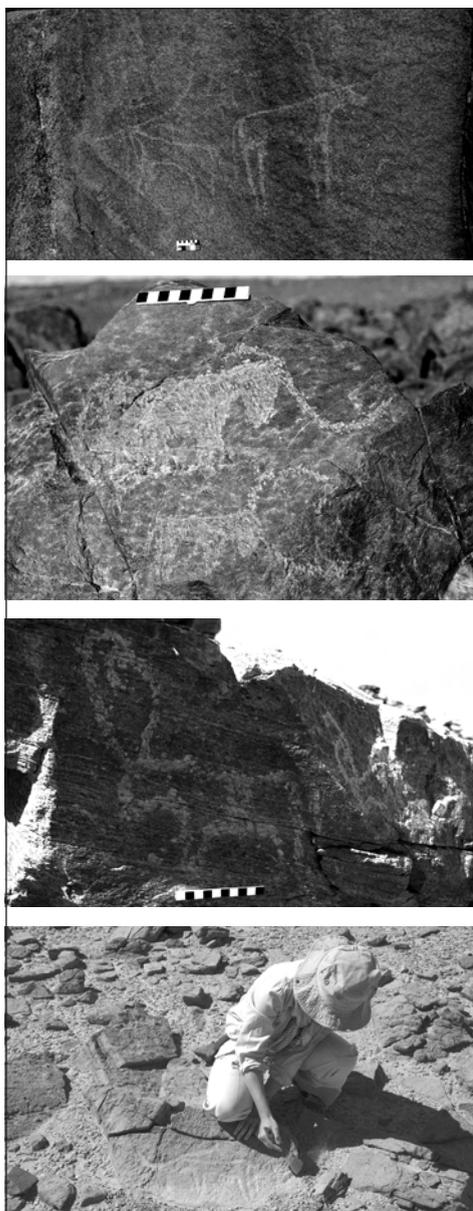


Fig. 3. Long-horned cattle depicted using diverse techniques: top, Gebel Gurgurib area; second from top, Keheili 17; third from top, Keheili 14; bottom, Keheili 39 (Photos E. Kuciewicz)

New sites recorded this season included Keheili 14 (GPS coordinates: N 19° 23' 33.5", E 32° 50' 49.2"), Keheili 17 (GPS coordinates: N 19° 23' 38.6", E 32° 50' 46.1"), Keheili 39 (GPS coordinates: N 19° 23' 33.3", E 32° 50' 42.1") and Gamamiya 30 (GPS coordinates: N 19° 20' 34.6",

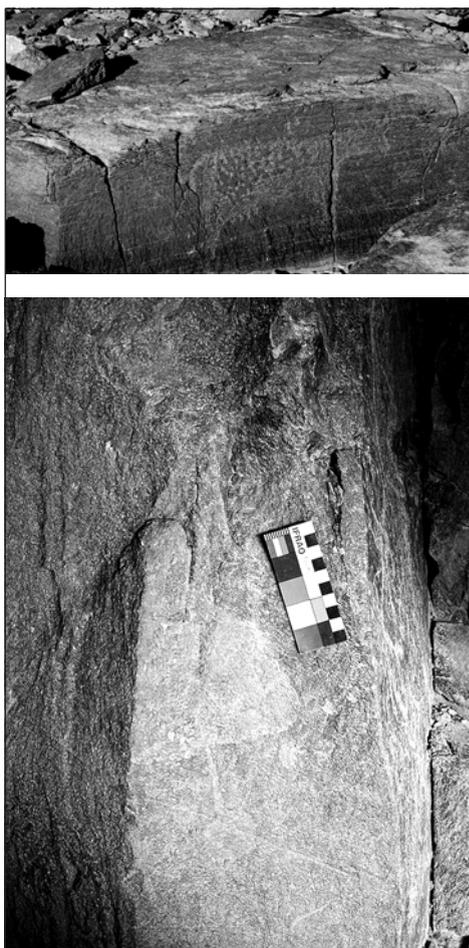


Fig. 4. Representation of a cow with emphasized udders from Gamamiya 30, top, and the head of a cow from Gamamiya 67 (Photo E. Kuciewicz, A. Rozwadowski)

E 32° 48' 24.4"). Keheili 14 and 17 were similar in character, that is, small clusters of stone blocks situated in exposed and elevated areas. Some of the blocks seem to have been placed there intentionally. The repertoire of motifs did not differ much from that already noted for the region. It comprised mostly long-horned cattle, the color characteristics of the animals marked with vertical bands or using diverse techniques, such as pecking, incision and sunk relief [Fig. 3, two in the middle]. Additionally, there are also images of antelopes, horse riders and possibly dogs on site Keheili 17.

Contrary to the above mentioned sites, site Keheili 39 did not stand out on account of its location. It was merely an assemblage of stones on flat ground. Images

of long-horned cattle [Fig. 3, bottom] were accompanied by a depiction of camels. The color of the patina and style of execution suggested an obviously younger age for the latter representations.

Site Gamamiya 30 was set on the top of a hill. A few blocks bearing petroglyphs were found close together. Among others there was a fine depiction of a long-horned cow with emphasized udders [Fig. 4, top], as well as a few additional images of cattle and a very interesting composition placed on a flat, horizontal stone panel. The composition comprised presumed renderings of sandal tops with oval hollows in some of them. One side of the panel was covered with a number of parallel incisions [Fig. 5]. It may have been a rasp, a kind of stone musical instrument, bone



Fig. 5. Rasp(?) in stone, covered with sandal(?) images. Gamamiya 30
(Photo E. Kuciewicz)

counterparts of which, from the Neolithic age, have been found in Sudan (Krzyżaniak 2002: 231). Similar rasp-like forms were discovered on other sites in the area under consideration, including Gamamiya 67 (GPS coordinates: N 19° 21' 18.9", E 32° 48' 40.5"), where two stones with similar cuts were noted. They seem to correspond to the depiction of four cows and a man below them, placed on a vertical stone surface. The edge of the surface was also "ornamented" with numerous incisions, much smaller however than those on the presently recorded stone.

An image of the head of a cow/bull at Gamamiya 67 appeared to have been of special character, this being confirmed by the unusual care taken in its execution, its unusual size (much larger than any other motif recorded on the site) and the fact that only it was represented [Fig. 4, bottom]. It reveals an interesting aspect of rock art in the area of the Fourth Cataract,

namely, the incorporation of natural rock forms into the images (Rozwadowski 2009). A similar phenomenon was noted at Keheili 17, where the upper parts of the outlines of cattle evidently took advantage of the natural shape of the rock.

Rock art recording in the Fourth Cataract area has been completed. The next stage is a thorough analysis and an attempt to interpret the collected material. Some of the sites will have been lost forever once the lake behind the dam is flooded and it will be impossible to verify the data, but the observations made during the surveys, coupled with the extensive body of photographic, descriptive and drawn documentation should help to develop an understanding of the messages incorporated in this art. It should help at least in gaining a kind of 'rock art sensitivity', noticing some less visible aspects of rock art in general, the messages it conveys and the ways in which it can be interpreted.

Ewa Kuciewicz
Institute of Archaeology, Jagiellonian University
31-007 Kraków, Poland
ul. Gołębia 11
ewa.kuciewicz@uj.edu.pl

Assoc. Prof. Andrzej Rozwadowski
Institute of Eastern Studies, Adam Mickiewicz University
61-486 Poznań, Poland
ul. 28 Czerwca 1956 r. 198
rozw@amu.edu.pl

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