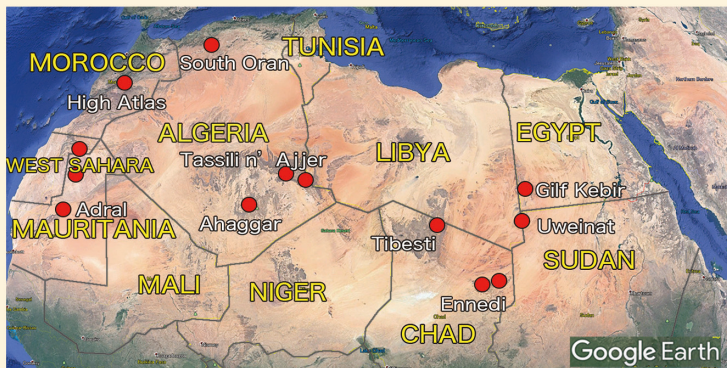


SAHARAN ROCK ART



The Sahara desert - the largest desert in the world - had periods called “Green Sahara”. From about 11,500 years ago until about 5,000 years ago the Sahara was fully covered with vegetation. At this time, various groups of people came to reap the benefits of this fertile land. Each of these groups left their own unique art in the form of rock paintings and engravings.

The Upper Paleolithic Cave Art, such as Lascaux and Altamira, etc., show mostly wild animals in naturalistic style. Human figures are rarely depicted, but when they are they are drawn in a simplistic style. On the other hand, the Saharan Rock Art, from the late Paleolithic age to the Neolithic age, show not only animals, but also elaborate images of humans in various forms of activity. They cover a wide gamut of subjects ranging from every day life to the spiritual world. The Saharan Rock Art shows an important evolution in the development of man and art.

At this exhibition, all photos of the Rock Art are reproduced at their actual size and the beholder will feel as if they stand in front of the real painting/engraving.

01 GREAT GOD 515x308cm **Sefar, Tassili n'Ajjer, Algeria** **Hunters' period, Round Head style**

A giant, locally called Great God, is over three meters high with horn like protrusions on his head, biceps and a huge scrotum. Two pot-bellied pregnant women are lying on both sides. A procession of women who look like they are praying to the giant - most probably for fertility and/or smooth delivery. This painting is one of the oldest rock art in the Sahara. The style of this period is called “Round Head” as humans are depicted mostly with round heads.

The Saharan rock paintings are not in deep caves, but in the shallow shelters of weathered sandstone rocks, as shown in the photograph. Dating of the paintings is not possible but remains discovered at the site date back some 8,000 years. However, the shelters are open and the relationship between the excavated artefacts and the rock paintings are weak and cannot be used as a decisive factor for dating.



02 PEOPLE WITH SCARIFICATION 103x180cm
 Tan Zoumaitak, Tassili n'Ajjer, Algeria
 Hunters' period, Round Head style

People with scarification, generally formed by sharp tools, wear neckless, bracelets and possibly masks. They look like they are dancing or participating in a ritual. Some animal images are superimposed over images of people. Superimposed paintings are commonly found in prehistoric art.



03 SWIMMERS 412x200cm
 Tin Tazarift, Tassili n'Ajjer, Algeria
 Hunters' period, Round Head style

The lower person appears to be swimming in a river, while the person above appears to be floating in the air. The painting dates from a time when there was no perspective, and it is possible that the figures were depicted swimming in the same water. The Alien theory proposed by Erich von Däniken is romantic, however, this image is indeed very mystical.



04 CAVE OF SWIMMERS 206x160cm
 Wadi Sura, Gilf Kebir, Egypt, Hunters' period

The site was used as a backdrop in the movie "The English Patient". Hungarian Count L. Almásy discovered this site in 1933 and he named it "The Cave of Swimmers". It is controversial as to whether it is depicting a procession of swimmers or not, as the people appear to be flying toward a headless animal. The most popular theory to date proposes a depiction of a world after death.

Dating of Saharan Rock Art

The technique for directly dating the Saharan Rock Art does not currently exist. Radiocarbon dating is not possible because the paints do not contain organic materials, such as charcoal or glue. Uranium-series dating is also not possible because water does not seep through and form a calcium carbonate film on the painting, as is the case with some cave paintings.

As direct measurement is not possible, the production date is classified relatively or indirectly. Superimpositions, which are common in prehistoric rock paintings, provide an important clue to identifying relative dates. The style of painting is also classified, and the presence, or absence and type of livestock is classified according to style. Around 10,000 years ago, when the Sahara greened up, the first people to arrive were hunters from the

south. Next came cattle herders from the east, and between 7,000 and 6,000 years ago cattle were spread throughout the Sahara.

However, from around 5,000 years ago, aridification began again and cattle gradually became inaccessible. Aridification progressed to the point where cattle could no longer be kept in eastern areas such as Uweinat around 5,000 years ago, and in the Central Sahara around 4,000 years ago. This was followed by the horse era (around 3,500 years ago) and the camel era (AD onwards). However, in Ennedi and other areas close to the Sahel (southern margin of the Sahara), aridification was slower and cattle and camels coexisted on the paintings.

Significant progress has recently been made in the dating of the Saharan Rock Arts. An amateur researcher found a close match be-

tween the distribution of the Iheren style rock paintings and the distribution of keyhole-shaped tumulus, and have theorized from the tumulus artefacts that the authors were a people who had been in the Central Sahara for several hundred years, some 5,000 years ago. This was the result of an exhaustive search of vast amounts of satellite imagery (GoogleEarth/BingMaps) to map the distribution of keyhole-shaped tumulus. There remain many unexplored areas in the Sahara and new discoveries are still being made.





05 ARCHERS IN COMBAT 146x100cm

Sefar, Tassili n'Ajjer, Algeria

Cattle period, Cattle herders

There are a number of war scenes depicted in the rock art of Tassili n'Ajjer. However, there is no depiction of any dead bodies. Neolithic people were the first to engage in wars according to archeological finds. Wars or fights between different groups in the Neolithic period were probably caused by disputes over territory or ownership of cattle, etc. This is the period when agriculture and pastoralism began.



06 BUTCHERS 146x103cm

Sefar, Tassili n'Ajjer, Algeria Cattle period,

White cattle and sheep herders, Iheren style

People are butchering animals with hand axes and boomerang shaped tools (knife?). Men wear only loincloths while women wear long skirts, elaborate upper wear and berets on the head. People are surrounded by sheep and cattle. Cattle horns have been modified artificially. The most prevalent theory says that the white pastoralist stayed for a short period of time around 5,000 years ago.



07 HOUSE OF LOVERS 146x103cm

Borou, Tibesti, Chad

Cattle period, Cattle and sheep herders

Cattle and sheep are grazing in meadows and men are milking them. There is a house set in an idyllic pastoral landscape. Passing through a rope curtain to the inside of the house, men and women are seen making love. The man on the right is provably playing a musical instrument. In the middle of the room there is a big jar, possibly containing alcohol. Some men and women seem to be fighting for a partner.

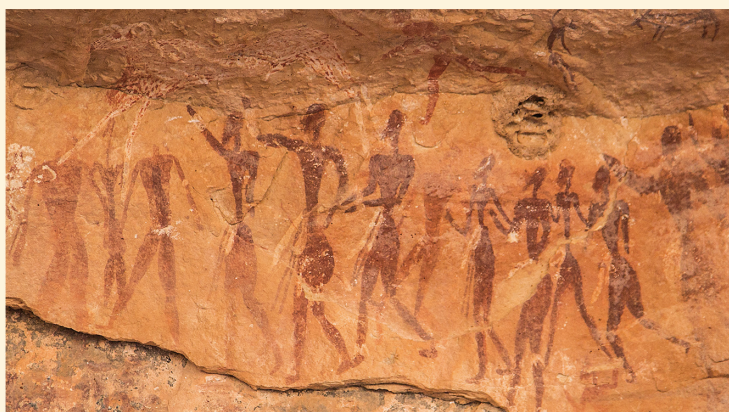


08 WARRIORS LINED UP 146x103cm

Cheire, Ennedi, Chad

Iron age, Cattle herders

Warriors are depicted by the use of very fine lines. They hold spears and have feathers on their heads. Some are wearing a T-shirt like upper garment. Somewhat separated from the warriors, is a group of women with long skirts. Very long spear-heads can only be produced by the use of metal such as iron. The knowledge of ironmaking came from Nubia (Sudan) sometime around 500BC.



09 PROCESSION 146x103cm

Uweinat, Sudan

Cattle period, Cattle herders

Covering 10 meters of a rock wall, numerous human and animal figures are depicted. In this scene, people seem to be walking towards something. Four-legged animals are superimposed on the paintings of marching people. Other scenes show people hunting and herds of cattle. Cattle herding in the region began around 7,000 years ago, but by 5,000 years ago the climate had become too arid to keep cattle.



ROCK ENGRAVINGS

Rock engravings are not so numerous in Saharan Rock Art and are concentrated on riverbanks where there are many vertical and horizontal rocks. As with paintings, many humans and animals are depicted but a characteristic feature is the large number of geometric patterns, which are rarely seen in paintings. In particular, spirals and concentric circles are common throughout the Sahara.

10 CATTLE HERDERS 412x245cm Niola Doa, Ennedi, Chad Cattle period, Cattle herders

The engraving of "Niola Doa" is very unique depicting human figures filled with geometric patterns. These types of engravings are found only in a limited area. The exact dating is unknown, but based on the typical pose of the cattle herders with sticks on their shoulders it is thought they come from the Neolithic age.



11 SUN DISC 103x140cm Yagour, High Atlas, Morocco Bronze Age, Cattle herders

Ancient Berber animism believed that 'sun, land and water' were essential to man. The depiction shows the sun, land and rivers surrounded by mountain ranges. This is the very landscape of the Yagour Plateau, which is surrounded by the High Atlas mountains and is over 2,000 meters above sea level.



Cattle at a stream



Le Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle

12 FRESCO OF IHEREN 824x270cm REPLICA BY HENRI LHOTE 840x248

Iheren, Tassili n'Ajjer, Algeria Cattle period, White pastoralist

Masterpiece of Saharan Rock Art

"The finest work of rock painting ever discovered in the Sahara Desert. It is a beautiful rock painting praised as "a masterpiece of the Neolithic realism school" (French archaeologist Henri Lhote).

Lhote organized a survey team in 1970 (the year after the discovery) to produce a life-size replica. Many parts of the actual painting have become difficult to see with the naked eye due to fading and dust

build-up over the years, but the reproductions make it possible to read every detail.

In this exhibition, all of the reproductions will be displayed in full-scale photographs in cooperation with the Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle (National Museum of Natural History - France).

Looking at the reproductions, one notices that the entire painting is harmoniously integrated into a single composition. Surprisingly, the narra-

tive is structured like a Japanese picture scroll or folding screen painting.

The narrative proceeds from right to left. At the far right, people fold up their camps and prepare to move on. Beyond them, a man walks with a child in his arms and a woman rides on the back of a cow. When they reach the new land, the men unpack and the women set up their tents. The life of the Neolithic nomads is depicted in every detail with masterful brushwork.

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Meguro Art Museum Citizens Gallery October 5 - 10, 2022

10:15 to 17:45 (14:00 last day)
Admission Free

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