



Book Reviews

NARRATIVES AND JOURNEYS IN ROCK ART: A READER EDITED BY GEORGE NASH AND ARON MAZEL

Archaeopress, Oxford, 2018. 684pp, 319 B&W and col figs and plates, 24 tables, pb, ISBN 978-1-78491-560-5, £75.00

This new reader contains a selection of 35 papers relating to rock art research dating from a period between 1979 to 2014. The editors, in their introduction, point out the scope of their volume is to provide access to a poignant range of narratives and theoretical approaches that are derived from a selection of countries around the world. The articles, however, are not organised by region, theme nor chronology. One has the choice of following the random line up from start to finish or dip in and peruse papers that strike one's fancy. For the purpose of this review the chapters are discussed by region.

The beginning two chapters feature research from South Africa. The first chapter is by David Lewis-Williams and explores the connections of particular motifs found in San rock art with visions of the spirit world and altered states of consciousness. The second chapter is a multi-authored paper lead by Jamie Hampson that seeks to define styles and distribution of San rock art in Mpumalanga province.

Three other chapters also offer other perspectives on South African rock art. Janette Deacon explores the power of place and imagery in the northern Cape based on 19th-century accounts by /Xam San individuals, while David Morris discusses the chronological framework of artistic techniques and themes found in the same region. Similarly, Aron Mazel examines the polychrome rock paintings of the Maloti-Drakensburg range, south-east South Africa. He reviews their recent absolute dates and postulates their social context within the contact period between hunter-gatherers and agriculturists that happened two thousand years ago.

Moving to the northern part of Africa, the troubled political history of the rock art of the Tassili-n-Aijer region, Algeria is examined by Jeremy Keenan. This is followed by Cornelia Kleinitz's investigation into the acoustic qualities of the rock art landscape within the Fourth Nile Cataract of Sudan.

The only paper from the vast continent of Asia is by Ekaterina Devlet and explores the shamanistic connections of rock art from central and southern Siberia ranging from Bronze Age imagery to etchings of shamans made during historical times. This is followed by an article based in the Middle East by Davida Eisenberg-Degen and Steven Rosen that focuses upon rock art in the Negev Desert, southern Israel.

Five chapters are devoted to Australian rock art. Robert Layton discusses the imagery of northern Australia through a dated structuralist approach that conceives images and their accompanying myths as 'texts' that frame human behaviour. John Clegg analyses the meanings of the 19th-century rock art near a Hospital for the Insane in Sydney Harbour, New South Wales, while Jo McDonald examines the stylistic variability of engraved Aboriginal art of the same region. An overly complicated model for religio-spatial behaviour is employed by Matthew Kelleher in an attempt to explain rituals associated with Aboriginal rock art sites in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales. This is followed by Paul Taçon's discussion on the rock paintings of the Waanyi community in north-west Queensland with regards to its local variability and role of binding communities to place.

Moving across the Pacific to the Americas, there is regrettably only a single paper from Canada. Daniel Arsenault interprets the rock art of the Algonkian landscape in Quebec through ethnographic and historical approaches. He importantly offers early accounts about the images by European settlers. Heading below the 49th parallel, James Keyser discusses the Tsagiglalal petroglyph motif of a stylised face found at sites in the lower Columbia River region that goes through the states of Oregon and Washington, USA. Johannes Loubser analyses cupmarks found in the foothills of the state of Georgia that are situated near occupation sites located by creeks and rivers. This is followed by David Whitley's examination of the link of particular rock art images to ethnography and shamanistic practices from southern California.

We then jump to South America where Frank Meddens discusses the role of Inka cupmarked stones in the Chicha valley in the southern highlands of Peru. He argues they were markers of social space and agricultural cycles often placed in locations near canals and rivers. This is followed by a paper by Francisca Moya *et al.* on the study of the abstract rock paintings in the San Pedro Viejo de Pichasca rock shelter, north-central Chile.

There are numerous papers dealing with rock art found in Europe. Starting with the Mediterranean countries, Angelo Fossati investigates the rock art images of the Valcomonica-Valtellina region, northern Italy and their connections to engraved menhirs and stelae during the 4th–3rd millennium BC. Robert Bednarik discusses his methodology for calculating erosion rates affecting exposed petroglyphs in central western Spain, while Maunel Santos Estévez and

Yolanda Seoane Veiga propose a new rock art chronology for north-west Spain based on the excavation of sites with radiocarbon dated deposits overlaying petroglyphs.

Moving north, Margaret Conkey outlines some theories which attempt to explain the context of Upper Palaeolithic cave art in France and Spain. Her own approach conceives the art as part and parcel of social activities. Meanwhile, Jean Clottes explores how prehistoric artists could have experienced French caverns and considers Upper Palaeolithic caves as underground landscapes.

Crossing the English Channel, Richard Bradley *et al.* outline a method of quantifying the location of cup and rings in the Northumberland landscape, while Clive Waddington *et al.* present results of the excavation of Hunterheugh Crag, Northumberland that firmly dates examples of British rock art to the Neolithic. George Nash *et al.* discuss the discovery of an engraving of a reindeer in Cathole Cave, south Wales that has been dated to the Upper Palaeolithic. Meanwhile, across the Irish Sea, Muiris O'Sullivan explores the style and distribution of engravings in the Neolithic passage tombs of the Boyne Valley, southern Ireland.

Moving further north, there are five chapters devoted to rock art found in Scandinavia. Knut Helskog explores foreshore sites from Alta, northern Norway and the Kola Peninsula of Karelia, Russia and suggests these are places where the earth, sky and sea meet. Kalle Sognnes similarly examines the landscape settings of petroglyph sites in the Trøndelag region, Norway and argues some are clearly connected to special locations within mountains and valleys or by rivers and foreshores. Joakim Goldhahn discusses the archaeoacoustic potential of prehistoric rock art sites in northern Sweden and suggests sites were chosen for their aural attributes. Liliana Janik examines theoretical approaches to two rock art sites in northern Sweden and argues the images communicate through visual means rather than a language. In contrast, Jarl Norbladh outlines the classic semiotic approach in his analysis of Swedish petroglyphs as forms of ancient communication.

Finally, Thomas Heyd provides a paper that is not bound to one region as he draws upon data from across the continents in contemplating theoretical issues of cultural contact between differing societies and the cultural appropriation of imagery.

Overall, *Narratives and Journeys in Rock Art: a Reader* provides an idiosyncratic selection of rock art articles reflecting the personal preferences of the editors. Though it presents papers from several geographical regions, this volume is not really a balanced survey of research from around the world nor is it a wide-ranging review of theoretical or methodological approaches. Articles devoted to South Africa, Australia and Scandinavia predominate, while there is a

notable absence of writings from Asia (eg, Urals, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, China, etc) as well as oddly Scotland. Nevertheless, the tome does offer a useful and engaging resource for beginners and those who are fully immersed in rock art studies.

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*The views expressed in this review are not necessarily those of the Society or the Reviews
Editor*