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Editorial

Libya Today: a Positive Spin for Heritage

Paul Bennett

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My love affair with Libya began in the early 1970's, when as a student at Manchester University, I joined the late John Lloyd at the Society for Libyan Studies excavations at Sidi Khrebish (ancient Berenice), Benghazi, and then in 1987 in the UNESCO Libyan Valleys Survey with the late Barri Jones and David Mattingly. I joined John again in Benghazi to excavate at Euesperides, the first (Greek and Hellenistic) Benghazi, and from 2000 to 2008, jointly directed a campaign of work there with Andrew Wilson and Ahmed Buzaian. In 2009 I assisted with the "Green Mountain Project", seeking to protect and manage the cities of the Cyrenaican Pentapolis, as part of a wider strategy to develop a sustainable future for the area, and in 2009-2010 to include archaeological mitigation in the "Tripoli City Codes" and the "Benghazi Urban Charter". In 2010-2011, I assisted with work for the World Bank, to draw-up a strategy for Cultural Heritage Protection in Libya, a five-year plan for the Department of Antiquities of Libya (DoA), and in 2014 to prepare a manual for the protection of built heritage.

As my knowledge of Libyan heritage and her people grew, and my own career as a professional archaeologist working in the south-east of England developed, I sought to assist Libya develop methods and systems of cultural heritage protection that I used in my working life in the UK. Impossible though this sounds today, in 2011 I was convinced that a sea-change in attitude was about to take place for heritage and for Libya, and I was optimistic for the future. Then the Arab Spring began, and the regime was overthrown to great rejoicing. Few who lived through the dark days of the regime regret

this change, but it is painful to remember the great loss of life (the Martyrs) and Gaddafi's prediction that chaos would follow his departure. Sadly, he was right (but there are many reasons for the chaos, none of them creditable as far as the regime is concerned) and years of division, warfare, intolerance, greed, xenophobia, forced eviction, wanton destruction, criminality and an appalling loss of life have followed. To those of us who have developed a love of Libya, her heritage, and her people, watching all this happen has been heart-breaking; but for those living through the nightmare, it has been so much worse, and my thoughts and prayers have always been with them.

After so many years of conflict since the overthrow of the regime, the most significant developments to date happened in 2021, with the declaration of a military ceasefire, the appointment of an interim Government of National Unity, continuing talks on a new constitution for Libya, and the prospect of national elections on 24th December 2021. Whilst these major developments have been universally welcomed, all those monitoring the crisis are aware that the new unified executive faces many challenges, not least implementing the ceasefire agreement, providing essential public services, particularly for the urban centres, instituting a program of meaningful reconciliation, addressing national budget needs, and organizing national elections. As I write this editorial, preparations for the election are beginning to falter, and there is talk of renewed conflict. We must remain optimistic and hope that the desire for peace and the spirit of reconciliation will gain traction in every corner of Libyan society.

Buried and standing archaeology is low down in a very long list of Libya's problems, and sad to say, the condition of the country's world class heritage is probably in a worse state today than it was in 2011. But there are grounds for optimism, and in this editorial, I intend to focus on Libyan colleagues and what they have managed to achieve, despite the challenges of recent years and the difficulties they continue to face daily. I will also discuss some recent attempts to build a brighter future for Libyan heritage through training and capacity building for the staff of the DoA and the Old Cities Agency (OCA), and for students of archaeology in Libyan universities. My perspective is narrow and UK-centric, but I know every mission dedicated to Libya, is doing its bit to build for a country free of conflict, and a nation seeking a bright new future for the heritage of its people when all the conflict is but a memory.

For all of us, an important part of that future are Libyan archaeological sites, whether they are against the coast or deep in the desert of this enormous country. This is not just for the unique academic insights they provide for human evolution and ingenuity, but for the potential they have in the long term for tourism, foreign investment, meaningful employment for the young, and for engendering pride in the population. 'For being Libyan'.

In a modern world battling climate change, seeking to create new energy sources, Libya needs a new economic direction, not one solely dependent on hydrocarbons. Heritage assets will be of great importance in the future, and they require protection in law (through enforcement) and well-resourced curation. So much development for new housing and agriculture is presently taking place within historic centres and in the countryside, against the coast and in the desert, that there is a very real risk that some of Libya's most valuable heritage assets will be severely compromised. The regime neglected heritage for forty years and civil war has extended the period further. The need for training within the DoA, OCA and in Libyan universities has never been greater, and I would like to think that we are all trying to help build a brighter future for Libyan heritage in these very challenging times, by investing in the present and future generations of Libyan archaeologists and cultural resource managers through training and capacity building.

ENCOURAGING SIGNS

Whilst Libya remains in a state of political change and fraught with social and economic pressures, not least the effects of the pandemic, there have been several encouraging signs.

A recent survey of young Libyans conducted online, with consultation through focus groups in cities, including stakeholder interviews, showed that they are desperate to see an end to conflict, desire stability, and seek opportunities for meaningful employment (67% of Libya's population are aged between 18 and 40 and 51% of young Libyans are unemployed). Most believe the route out of the crisis is a referendum on a new constitution, followed by elections. Whilst many of those consulted lack confidence in the present leadership, there was consensus that the older generation needs to consult with their age group and that collectively young Libyans constitute a powerful political force for good in the country, seeking not conflict, but stability and economic development in the private and public sectors. Above all, those consulted sought capacity building opportunities, including training in soft and technical skills, entrepreneurship, business English, the management and development of human resources systems, and even training programmes for young, aspiring politicians, seeking to help and develop their country.

Dr Hafeed Walda was appointed Ambassador to the permanent Libyan Delegation to UNESCO in 2020. A graduate of the University of Benghazi and King's College London, where he became a member of staff, Hafeed has consistently promoted the interests of Libyan heritage throughout his professional career. He has been particularly effective in the fight against the illegal trade in Libyan antiquities and has, with help from Libyan colleagues and members of foreign missions, successfully negotiated the repatriation of several stolen sculptures. In doing so, and by attending meetings at UNESCO, and international conferences in Arab countries and across Europe, always promoting Libyan heritage interests, he has raised the profile of Libya in challenging times. Most significantly, in February 2021, he encouraged the Libyan Government to sign the UNESCO 2003 Convention safeguarding intangible heritage. This is a fundamental act which signals governmental recognition of the importance of cultural heritage to the nation. One of his most recent achievements

has been to assist colleagues at Ghadames in their dealings with UNESCO, to take that city out of the 'at risk' register. This is discussed in more detail below. His wise council has seen Libya take an active and leading role in a significant number of UNESCO committees and the country is now better represented than it has been for nearly thirty years.

Another important individual to be celebrated at this time is Mustafa A. Turjman. Mustafa is known to many of you as Head of Research for the DoA, in Tripoli. He has been the main point of contact between the missions and the DoA for twenty-five years and the busiest man in the As-Saraya al-Hamra, organizing permissions, visas, reports and publications, and visits of Department staff to other countries for official business and conferences. Mustafa has helped all the missions, and our work could not have taken place without him. My colleague, advisor and friend retired from his post this year, and I take this opportunity to thank him for all he has done to assist us and to keep the DoA well-oiled and functioning. I know Mustafa is still working part-time and on behalf of us all, I wish him a very happy and restful retirement.

There are many rising stars in Libyan archaeology whose careers have been developed despite the troubled times. These include Dr Ahmed Buzaian, Dr Muna H. Haroun Abdelhamed and Dr Mohamed Omar M. Abdrbba who gained their doctorates in archaeology from the University of Leicester recently. Their doctoral theses will be published by the Society for Libyan Studies (SLS)¹ as Open Access volumes soon. Another graduate of Leicester University is Dr Ahmad Emrage who was selected as Fulbright Scholar late in 2019 and spent a year teaching at the Oberlin College, Ohio, USA. His thesis on Libyan fortified farms will also be published by the SLS. But there are many other Libyan scholars who have received Libyan state scholarships to study in Europe and the USA, and who have received additional help and support from out of country universities enjoying close ties with the DoA.

Every student deserves credit for pursuing their studies in these difficult times. They are the archaeologists, finds specialists, cultural resource managers and museum curators of the future, who with training, particularly in new technologies, site manage-

ment and the media, can help Libya develop a new and exciting future for archaeological sites, and instil in coming generations a deep-seated pride in the nation's heritage.

In addition to the recent repatriation of Libyan antiquities, a significant boost to national morale has been the opening in mid-March 2021 of a new museum at Tobra. The previous museum built in 1972 was in a decayed and dangerous state but housed an outstanding and nationally important collection of Greek pottery dating between the last quarter of the seventh century BC and the third quarter of the sixth, found during an emergency excavation against the foreshore in 1963-1965 under the direction of John Boardman. The museum had been closed for years, but it was a collaboration between the DoA, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Tobra, University of Benghazi, and local people that finally provided a new, secure, and stable home for the collection, together with other remarkable finds from ancient Taucheira. Everyone involved can take pride in the new museum. I see their success as a metaphor for the country; working together can create positive, meaningful, and long-term change.

EXCAVATIONS

Several excavations have been undertaken by Libyan colleagues recently. Following-on from the work undertaken at the Haua Fteah cave during the darkest days of civil war (completing internationally important excavations for Cambridge University and later overseeing the backfilling of the excavations), Dr Ahmad Emrage, and a small team of colleagues from the DoA have responded to an episode of coastal erosion at Apollonia. The collapse of a natural rock wall protecting the ancient harbour and the increasing frequency and intensity of winter storms is beginning to erode the foreshore and damage nationally important sub-surface harbour installations. Ahmad and his team recorded and then protected a sequence of buildings dating from the first to fourth centuries AD on the foreshore. Monitoring of the foreshore by the DoA and of the floor of the ancient harbour by volunteer divers is continuing.

¹ Now British Institute for Libyan & Northern African Studies (BILNAS).

An emergency archaeological excavation during the building of a new mosque near the Omar al-Mukhtar University, al-Bayda, was undertaken by the students and staff of the Department of Archaeology, led by Mohammed al-Twati Boshah². Parts of a building with a mosaic floor, destroyed during an earthquake in AD 365, were exposed and recorded. More importantly, after negotiation, the developers agreed to re-position the new mosque to protect the discovery, and the opportunity was taken to mount open days so that local people and the media could view the discovery. Subsequently, ground around the new mosque has been zoned as public open space, to be protected from future development.

Two phases of evaluation trenching have been undertaken by the DoA Benghazi at the site of Euesperides, south and west of the Sidi Abid cemetery. The first, in the former harbour of Euesperides (in the Sebkha es-Selmani) was directed by Dr Lamin al-Huni, in advance of a development by the local football club. Here new buildings were restricted to an area away from the ancient city. The second, directed by Dr Saleh Alhasi al-Agab and Dr Ahmad Emrage in the south-eastern part of the Lower City, east of the Agora, ensured that new development was restricted to land previously quarried or destroyed by post-second world war development. Negotiations are taking place between the DoA and both developers seeking their help (through a form of planning condition) to clean the remaining parts of the archaeological site, build secure fences around them, and provide illustrated information boards for the public explaining why the site of Euesperides is important. Our hope is that arrangements like this will ultimately secure the future of the site and may eventually see an archaeological park established for Euesperides at Sidi Abid and an archaeological garden at Sidi Khrebish for the remains of ancient Berenice.

SURVEYS

Several surveys have taken place recently or are taking place. These include fieldwork along the coast:

the “Cyrenaican Coastal Survey (CCS)”, by a DoA team led by Ahmad Emrage. The project, managed by MarEA (Maritime Endangered Archaeology) based at Southampton, Oxford, and Dublin, is funded by the Arcadia Fund and the SLS. The team are assessing the impact of new development on archaeological sites within the study area with remote sensing by satellite imagery (undertaken in the UK) and ground-truthing by the Libyan team.

A similar survey to record new sites, damage to known archaeological remains, and to identify potential threats, has recently started in an area between Cyrene and al-Qubbah. The initiative by the DoA in association with the Islamic University of al-Saied Mohamed bin Ali al-Sanussi, al-Bayda, with support from the American Society of Overseas Research (ASOR), has provided new discoveries but Ahmad Emrage, who is also leading this project, reports worrying examples of damage to archaeological sites by new buildings, quarrying of gravels and sand on an industrial scale and large tracts of ground clearance for agriculture.

A third survey led by Hani al-Abduly, Controller of Benghazi for the DoA, is assessing the condition of rural archaeological sites in the Benghazi plain, using drone surveys and creating 3D models of some sites. More importantly, the DoA is organizing meetings with landowners, community leaders and members of the public to raise awareness of rural heritage and to protect sites in the future.

A fourth survey was conducted in the Wadi Majer, 15 km south of Zlitan and 35 km south-east of Lepcis Magna. Led by Muftah A. al-Haddad of the Department of Archaeology and Ancient History of Azzaytuna University, Tarhuna, the project continued fieldwork conducted between 2013-2017, to provide more detailed information, including assessments of condition and threat, for over 130 multi-period sites. The fieldwork, funded by SLS, combined remote sensing expertise in satellite image analysis and mapping by the “Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa” (EAMENA) project team based at Leicester and Oxford with ground-truthing and on-site assessment by Muftah and his colleagues.

² M. AL-TWATI BOSHAAH, *Preliminary Report on Salvage Excavation at the Southern Limit of Ancient Balagrae*, in *LibSt*, 52, 2021, pp. 177-181.

See also the article by A.H.Y. Abdulkariem in this volume, *infra*, pp. 211-215.

TRAINING EXCAVATIONS

Training excavations for Libyan university students at Tocra and al-Bayda have continued despite the civil war, with fieldwork generally taking place in the spring and autumn terms. New training excavations have taken place in 2021 in Cyrene, Benghazi and Sabratha and I hope this trend will continue. I hope more support will be directed towards Libyan university training excavations by foreign missions when they return to Libya.

CYRENE, GOOD AND BAD

One of the most impressive episodes of fieldwork by DoA staff was undertaken at Cyrene by the former Controller Fadel Abdulaziz, who with help from Professor Susan Kane of the American Archaeological Mission to Libya, contributed to an important report from the DoA to UNESCO, to demonstrate that whilst still being 'at risk,' work was in progress to improve the situation of the World Heritage Site (WHS). Leading from the front and with a small DoA team, the support of local Boy Scouts, schoolchildren and members of the community, the most important parts of the site were litter-picked, with others cleared of vegetation and fallen trees, or made secure to prevent vandalism. New facilities were opened for visitors including lavatories and a small café run by volunteers. I am pleased to report that many Libyan families are now visiting the site.

Despite a singular lack of funding, resources and materials, significant work has also been undertaken on the restoration of several important Cyrene mosaics by a Department of Antiquities team led by conservator, Adel Othman El Mayer. An article on the work of this industrious team can be seen in *Libyan Studies* volume 52 (2021), together with a summary of other recent works undertaken by the Department on the WHS.

Whilst the condition of the core WHS has improved, illegal developments beset the suburbs of Cyrene, extending from the wide northern plain to al-Bayda in the south. Illegal buildings and agricultural projects are sprouting-up everywhere, even within the WHS, but notoriously so in the surrounding wadis, where an internationally important heritage of ancient cemeteries is being destroyed daily.

The flouting of Libyan heritage law is commonplace and despite all the good works of the DoA, civic discipline has broken down, a great many Libyans have become developers of the most sensitive archaeological areas imaginable and one of Libya's and the world's important heritage assets is being degraded. My colleague Oliva Menozzi visited the site recently and praised the work of DoA staff but regretted the return of litter and was heart-broken to see the amount of new development, the extent of destruction to the cemeteries, and the despoiling of the surrounding landscape – the wonderful setting that Cyrene has enjoyed for millennia. Urgent action is required here based on public consultation, a long-term management plan and a 'buffer zone' that protects the core site, the cemeteries, and the setting of this most precious resource.

Development pressures, the effects of climate change and the lack of human and monetary resources for maintenance exist everywhere, perhaps not to the same degree as Cyrene, but at Lepcis Magna and Sabratha, the suburbs of both great cities are threatened by development, with the core sites needing greater curatorial care to combat climate change, coastal erosion, and decaying masonry. Ancient sites in the desert wadis are exceptionally vulnerable to developments for housing and agriculture, but also for climate change. The mud brick buildings of Ghadames for example have suffered recently from unusually high winter rains and the resulting collapse of neglected co-dependant buildings. Without vigilance, active monitoring, maintenance, and outreach in the community, these sites, and even the great prehistoric art gallery of the Tadrart Akakus (the WHS in the mountains of the Ghat District of Western Libya) are actively under threat from issues ranging from development, an expansion of agriculture, including the desertification of wadis through over-exploitation of local aquifers and the results of climate change, to a dramatic increase in incidences of theft, looting and vandalism.

INITIATIVES FOR TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

One of the most important initiatives undertaken in the recent past and recently, and one very close to my heart, has been the publication by SLS, in Arabic, of two archaeological guides to Libya. The first of these, *Libya Archaeological Guides. Tripolitania* by Dr

Philip Kenrick was funded by the World Bank and saw over 3000 books gifted to the DoA, for circulation within the Department, to schools and universities. The outreach initiative was extended in 2021 with the successful delivery to the DoA in Benghazi of 3000 printed copies of Philip Kenrick's *Libya Archaeological Guides. Cyrenaica* (with a contribution by Dr Ahmed Buzaian, who translated the text with Dr Abdullah Rhebi, and with funding from two sponsors) and the publication on-line, for free downloading, of both volumes. The original publications in English and the translations into Arabic are enormously important not just for the dissemination of knowledge of Libya's heritage to the world, and for future tourism, but more importantly to Libya's own population, whose knowledge of their own past (distant and recent), is sadly lacking. Above all, the publications will benefit Libya's antiquities and win, we hope, many new champions to their cause, particularly landowners and government planners. We await a third Libya Archaeological Guide to the Fazzan in English and in Arabic, to complete the series and give all those living in the province the opportunity to learn about, protect, and promote their desert heritage.

Other important initiatives include "Training in Action", a programme supported by a grant from the British Academy Cultural Protection Fund (CPF), led by Professor Anna Leone of Durham University and Dr Will Wootton of King's College London, to train professionals from Libya and Tunisia in a raft of disciplines to encourage better cultural resource management of national heritage and develop knowledge of and respect for the past through outreach in the community.

Also supported by a grant from CPF and by the Arcadia Fund is the EAMENA project. Founded in 2015 and based in the universities of Leicester, Oxford, and Durham to respond to widespread and increasing threats to archaeological sites, particularly in conflict zones, the project uses up-to-date technology to identify and protect heritage across the region. This internationally important undertaking seeks to create a spatial database of endangered archaeology available to all, and to train heritage professionals in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in techniques to identify, record, monitor and report on archaeological sites and landscapes which are under threat, and to develop an excellence in heritage management skills. Field-

work to ground-truth sites identified by remote sensing in Libya is impossible for the EAMENA team to undertake and for this they rely on trained Libyan colleagues to assess site conditions, make detailed records, share data and findings, and ultimately contribute towards the building of a comprehensive and interrogatable sites and monuments record for Libya. The project is on-going.

My final initiative to provide training and capacity building is "Managing Libya's Cultural Heritage" (MaLiCH), a major three-year training programme for DoA staff in charge of the World Heritage Sites of Ghadames, Lepcis Magna and Sabratha (all considered to be 'at risk' by UNESCO). The project, funded by the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas (ALIPH) and run by Dr Will Wootton and colleagues from King's College, and University of London, with partners at the University of Cairo, commenced earlier in 2021, with three workshops on the World Heritage Convention and its implementation in Libya. This important trail-blazing scheme to develop in-house knowledge of up-to-date methods of curating, maintaining, and promoting the World Heritage Sites, locally and internationally, has many objectives. Of particular importance in terms of outcomes will be the development of protective 'buffer zones' and the building of a comprehensive World Heritage Site Management Plans for each site to begin the process of lifting them out of the UNESCO 'at risk' register. The MaLiCH team, with the help of Dr Hamed Walda have already assisted representatives at Ghadames with a presentation to UNESCO of a draft Management Plan as a first stage of taking the city out of the register. The presentation has been well received by UNESCO.

So, in this editorial I hope I have thrown a little light on some of the archaeological work being undertaken by Libyan colleagues and a few training and capacity building initiatives based in UK universities and supported by the CPF or the SLS. Other missions have supported similar initiatives and we hope that, like those working together to build a new museum at Tocra, that by forging partnerships (and here I mean partnerships between the missions working in Libya), we can help Libya to build for the future.

In September 2021 the Italian archaeological missions held a special event promoted by the DoA and the Italian Embassy in Tripoli to celebrate seventy

years of archaeological activity in the country³. Following so much conflict and the on-going pandemic, this is an enormously positive sign. I congratulate the excellent work in the past, share the optimism for the future, and look forward to working with you, with all missions, and our Libyan colleagues, in building for a post-conflict Libya that seeks to protect and promote its world class heritage. This, for the benefit of its people and for all those past and present who love the country and wish to see Libya prosper.

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Canterbury (UK), November 2021

³ See the article by C. Mascolo in this volume, *infra*, pp. 223-226.

Articoli e Note

Rock Engravings at Ras al-Jamal, Kirissah Region (Darnah, Cyrenaica)

Saad Abdullah Abuhajar

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This paper examines five rock engravings discovered at Ras al-Jamal, 9 km from Kirissah, along the coast between Ras al-Hilal and Darnah, and depicting wild animals: oryxes, bovines and, possibly, a small elephant. The site has also yielded stone flakes and pottery which, like the engravings, represent important testimony to human activity in the area from the prehistoric to the Classical periods. Amongst the other finds we note rock cupules, natural erosion depressions and architectonic remains. Furthermore, the Author makes some observations on the chronology of the engravings and concludes with a series of recommendations for the safeguarding and improvement of the archaeological site.

Keywords

Prehistory of Libya, rock art, Ras al-Jamal, Jabal Akhdar, lithics

The region of Kirissah is rich in archaeological sites relating to chronologically extremely different historical periods: the earliest date to the prehistoric period, then the Classical era and on, down to our own times¹. This variety is due to the characteristics of the terrain, the abundance of natural resources and a mild climate which have all favoured a stable human presence in the region, as revealed by the wealth of archaeological remains such as rock engravings, structures (like necropoleis, dwellings, irrigation channels) and mobile elements, including stone tools, pottery and ornamental objects.

The paper examines a number of rock engravings² depicting wild animals. Although these are not very numerous, their position and the manner in which they were engraved represent an important object of research.

POSITION AND NAME

Ras al-Jamal³ lies roughly 9 km east of Kirissah⁴, between this latter town and Darnah, west of the main road which runs along the coast (Figs 1-2). The site consists of three small, low hills between the coast

¹ The translation of the text from Arabic to English was done by Mohamed al-Husbani. The Author would like to thank the anonymous referees for their precious comments and also Saleh Alhasi al-Agab, Paul Bennett, Ahmed Buzaian, Ahmad Emrage for their support. On the prehistory of the region see, in general, AL-HELOU 1960, pp. 11-12; BAQIR 1973, pp. 161-164; TAWFIK 1990, pp. 2-3; ABUHAJAR 1999, p. 21.

² See, in general, MORI 1965; BEDNARIK 1998.

³ Coordinates N 22° 29.865' E 32° 48.592'.

⁴ The village of Kirissah, the ancient Chersis, is located on the eastern coast of Libya, between al-Athrun and Darnah. The toponym is also known as Karasa, Kharsah, Ras Karsah, etc., but in this case the GoogleMaps version has been chosen. In the Italian historical cartography the site is mentioned as "Chersa". The region of Kirissah includes Jabal Wadiyan, Water Springs and Bahri Ars (Aras Kirissah). For further information, see. AL-ORFI 1996, pp. 100-105, 164, 175-176.



FIG. 1 - Satellite image of Cyrenaica from Susah to Darnah including the Kirissah region.



FIG. 2 - Ras al-Jamal. General view of the site.

and the main Kirissah-Darnah road where there are many ancient remains, both monuments and smaller finds, which give the area its historical and archaeological importance.

The origin of the name is still difficult to determine given the lack of information held by local residents. It could relate to the shape of these hills which resemble a camel's head (*jamal* in Arabic), or to the fact that a camel's head was found in this area. These are only suppositions, but they do indicate, however, the importance of this animal in the region.

THE DISCOVERY

The rock engravings were discovered entirely by chance in 1980, when a group of amateurs, exploring the neighbourhood of Kirissah in search of archaeological remains, came upon the site. The group was formed of Mustafa Bouchiha, Faraj al-Mzaini, Rizk Faraj, al-Salihin al-Mansuri, and Abdullah Ben Omran, all from the town of Darnah. The first to then illustrate these engravings was Fadel Ali Mohamed, Controller of Antiquities of Cyrenaica, who often visited the site⁵. Later the Author of this paper considered these works when preparing his Master thesis concerning the prehistoric sites of the Jabal Akhdar (presented 1999)⁶, and made various subsequent visits to both the site and the surrounding area⁷. Thanks to these surveys, other engravings of animals have also been found on the same rock surface as those already

known to us, along with some stone tools, showing that the human presence in this part of the Jabal Akhdar is as ancient as the sites of Susah, Ras al-Hilal and Darnah.



FIG. 3 - Ras al-Jamal. The rocky surface with the prehistoric engravings.

⁵ MOHAMED 1994.

⁶ ABUHAJAR 1999, pp. 71-74.

⁷ I would like to thank the work group who accompanied me in

the surveys: Adham el-Hasi, Ayman al-Masalati, Eyad Islil, Magdy al-Barasi.

THE ROCK ENGRAVINGS

The zoomorphic engravings were identified on the summit of the first hill lying to the east of Kirissah in the direction of Darnah. They are incised onto a flat and sloping rocky surface, with a natural bulge in the upper part. The overall measurements of the rock are 370 cm in width and 140 cm in height (Fig. 3).

Various architectonic structures are also present in the same area, of differing shapes and sizes, some small tombs and stone tools of different kinds⁸. The engravings can easily be reached by climbing the hill and looking carefully since their small size and the uniform aspect of the rock makes them difficult to discern. We have identified a total of five engravings, all depicting wild animals. The human form is not represented.

The first engraving

This example shows an oryx, a wild animal of the Bovidae family⁹, *al-maha* in Arabic (Fig. 4, a-b). The oryxes lived in different parts of Libya, and especially in the South where we know numerous engravings depicting them: to the East, in the zone of the Jabal al-Uwaynat, in the Jabal Arkanu, in the oases

of Bazimah and Rebianah and, to the West, in the Tadrart Akakus.

The first engraving depicts the animal standing, with the head turned towards the west (Fig. 5). The figure measures 44 cm in width and 34 cm in height, the tail is 6 cm long and the horns measure 10 cm, so in reduced proportions compared to the horns of the living animal. A schematic technique was used to produce the image, the body being a near-rectangle and other parts of the body being reduced to triangles, especially the tail and legs. Two lines engraved in the area of the neck could indicate the different colours of the animal. The feet lack hooves, perhaps due to difficulty depicting them since engraving requires greater precision than rock paintings.

It is well known that the oryx stands out thanks to its long horns which curve up and back over the animal's body. This characteristic is, however, missing in the engraving at Ras al-Jamal, where the horns are only 10 cm long, possibly due to the natural bulges on the rock face which prevented the engraving from being completed. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the second engraving of the same animal depicts the horns in natural proportions, this rock face not presenting impediments. We may also

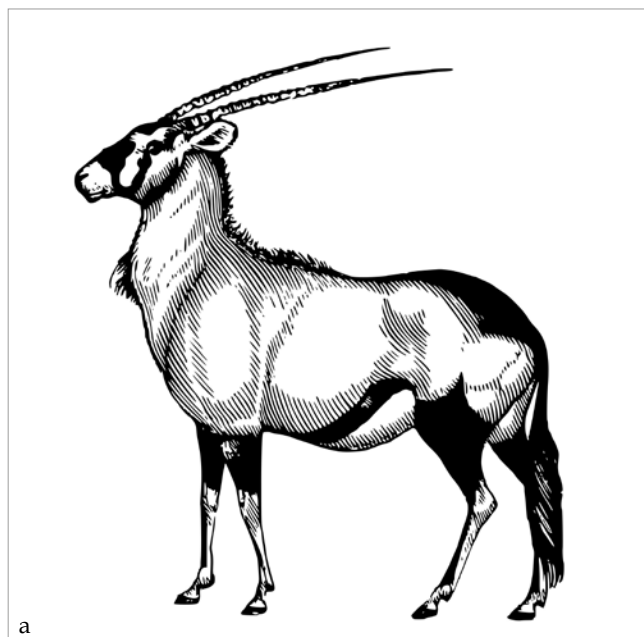


FIG. 4a-b - The Arabian oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*).



⁸ On the stone tools see RIZKANEH 1952, pp. 8-11, 33, 49-52, 68-77; AL-SHUKRI 1986, pp. 80-85.

⁹ Three species are known, two North African and typical of the desert (*Oryx dammah* and *Oryx gazella*); the third is native to the Ara-

bian peninsula (*Oryx leucoryx*). These animals are from warm, dry climates and adapt well to desert and semi-desert environments but can also be found on the steppe, arid plains, forested savannah and rocky hills.

exclude the hypothesis that the first engraving represents a young animal because of its small size. It is also to be noted that the horns, instead of being above the head curving backwards, start from the mouth and point up and then back over the body (Fig. 6a) which is rendered as a triangle, with short tail, perhaps because the artist wanted to emphasize this part of the animal and the strength of the legs (Fig. 6b)¹⁰. These details distinguish this engraving from all of the others.

As regards the technique used, the rock engraving was created with narrow lines, producing grooves that are only a few millimetres in depth and width.

The second engraving

This engraving also depicts an oryx and measures 36 cm in length, 45 cm in height, with the tail measuring 14 cm and the horns 37 cm (Fig. 7). The body has various incised lines, as in the first engraving, possibly representing the different colours of the animal's hide. The position of the head suggests that the animal is standing in front of a tree or a body of water (Fig. 7).

This engraving is less carefully made and of inferior quality to the preceding example. Both, however, share the same subject, the small dimensions and the engraving technique and could have been produced by the same artist. One difference between the two engravings is the length of the horns which, in this example, are shown in their natural proportions (Fig. 8, a-b).

The third engraving

This image shows a small bovine and measures 21 cm in length, 5 cm in height (Fig. 9). The head is missing, possibly due to erosion, whilst the rest of the animal is clearly visible. It is smaller than the other two examples, perhaps to indicate distance between the different figures and not so as to depict a small animal. This hypothesis could find confirmation in the position of the engraving beneath the first. The image is characterised by a schematic style with tri-

angular shapes and the short tail; there are no lines on the body itself as seen in the first and second engravings.

The fourth engraving

This was incised above the first engraving and could represent a bull (Fig. 10, a-b). The surface in the area of the animal's body is smooth and the head barely legible. This image, like the preceding example, is small and the size could, again, indicate distance between the animals depicted.

The fifth engraving

This engraving seems to show a small elephant, recognisable from its trunk and four legs (Fig. 11, a-b). The surface in the area of the body has been removed in part, but in a somewhat careless fashion. The hypothesis that this is an elephant is based on the presence of the trunk, but this seems improbable as the animal was not present in the region, as has been demonstrated by the various excavation campaigns conducted at the sites of Haua Fteah¹¹, Hagfet et-Tera¹², Hagfet ed-Dabba¹³ and Sidi Kurayyim al-Qarba¹⁴.

Various proposals have been made regarding this engraving: that the artist wanted to depict another animal but made a number of mistakes, or that the engraving pertains to another period of times, as can be deduced from the differing techniques and working of the rock, or that the trunk was added at a later date in an act of vandalism¹⁵, or the work of an impromptu artist.

PREHISTORIC ARTEFACTS FOUND IN THE AREA OF THE ENGRAVINGS

The site has yielded abundant archaeological evidence relating to different periods, both the prehistoric and the Classical. Stone finds, together with the animal engravings, are considered the most important elements from the prehistoric period¹⁶.

¹⁰ ABUHAJAR 1999, p. 33.

¹¹ MCBURNEY 1967, pp. 17-32, and 1971, p. 2.

¹² PETROCCHI 1940; MCBURNEY, HEY 1955, pp. 176-179, 181, 183-188, 276-277.

¹³ ABUHAJAR 1999, pp. 125-132.

¹⁴ MCBURNEY, HEY 1955, pp. 142-145, 154-155, 275-276, 292-295; ABDEL ALIM 1966, p. 2.

¹⁵ MCBURNEY, HEY 1955, pp. 271-278.

¹⁶ For further information on the prehistoric materials attested, see ABUHAJAR 1999, pp. 23-24.

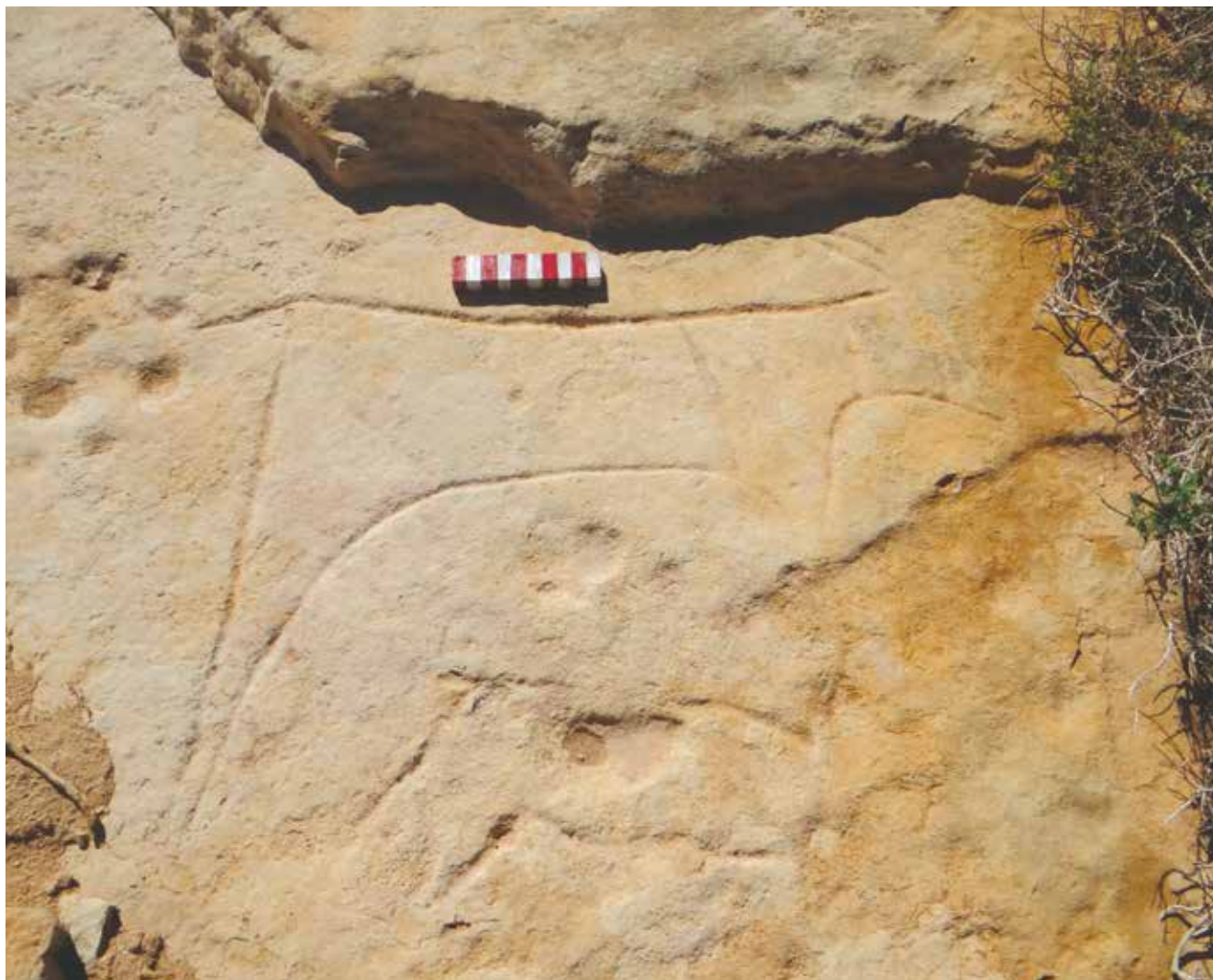


FIG. 5 - Ras al-Jamal. The first engraving depicting an oryx.



FIG. 6a-b - Ras al-Jamal. The first engraving depicting an oryx with highlighted horns and snout (a) and hind legs (b).



FIG. 7 - Ras al-Jamal. The second engraving depicting an oryx.

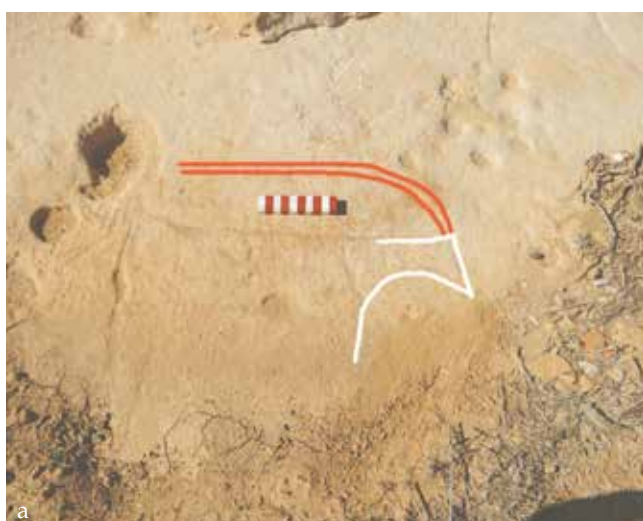


FIG. 8a-b - Ras al-Jamal. The second engraving depicting an oryx with highlighted horns and snout (a) and the back side of the body (b).



FIG. 9 - Ras al-Jamal. The third engraving depicting a small bovine.



FIG. 10a-b - Ras al-Jamal. The fourth engraving depicting a bull (?).



FIG. 11a-b - Ras al-Jamal. The fifth engraving depicting a small elephant (?).

Stone artefacts

During the first survey in the site in 1999, the Author collected 24 chipped stone tools¹⁷, including cores, small and large tools with one or two sharp edges, and assorted scrapers of varying shape and typology. Aside from the materials described here, other finds from this site are recorded without citing any details relating to typology, quantity or specific present location¹⁸. During the last visit to the site, the Author found a simple one-sided chisel burin on a naturally pointed flake, the latter perhaps reused, obtained using a skilled manufacturing technique (Fig. 12).

The variety of morphologies and typologies shown by the artefacts represents important testimony to the human presence at Ras al-Jamal from the Middle¹⁹ and Late Palaeolithic periods, down to the Classical era when architectonic structures were constructed. The stone artefacts found at the site have confirmed the prehistoric sequence for the Jabal Akhdar up to the Neolithic.

Pottery

Fragments of prehistoric pottery have also been identified in the same region²⁰. As with the stone artefacts, the pottery finds of varying typology and manufacture attest to different phases of human presence at Ras al-Jamal, the most important of these dating to the Graeco-Roman period.

In particular, the absence of any sites or materials dating to the Neolithic²¹ (including arrow-heads and small axes) raises doubts both to the presence of Neolithic settlements in this region, and the dating of the pottery found in this area.

To resolve such doubts it would be necessary to conduct field surveys, plan digging trenches and make comparisons with other sites in the region where Neolithic pottery has been found. During a meeting in 2012, Khaled Elhaddar, professor of Classical Archaeology at the University of Benghazi, stated that he was convinced that the pottery found

in the area of Ras al-Jamal dates to the Graeco-Roman period. A comparison, however, of the typology of this pottery and finds from the Neolithic horizon from the sites of Haua Fteah and Abu Tamsa²² would help provide an answer to this question.

OTHER FINDS

Rock cupules ('draughts game')

On the same rocky surface on which the engravings were made, there is also a group of circular cavities (rock cupules) (Fig. 13). These were created between the tail of the first engraved animal, and the head of the second, with a total of 12 rock cupules, distinguished by their shallowness and width. In this group we can identify the popular game of *siza* or *tesh* (in English, draughts or checkers) widespread everywhere amongst shepherds and attested in numerous ancient centres such as, for example, Susah where similar engravings can be seen on the surface of the western walls of the city.

Such a widespread presence makes it difficult to determine the precise date of these rock cupules, and the chronology of the engravings is not of much assistance here. The find could, however, provide important information regarding the human presence on the site where this game was, quite obviously, played. Its very position close to the engravings could suggest that this is an ancient game, possibly dating back to the Classical period.

Natural depressions

A number of small depressions can be seen scattered over the entire rock face (Fig. 14)²³, created by natural elements (melting and/or erosion) and not by human intervention. These depressions cannot furnish information concerning the chronology of the engravings either since they are, in all probability, older.

¹⁷ These objects have been conserved in the Museum of Darnah since 1999.

¹⁸ It is likely that these tools were collected by antiquities dealers who visited the site from the nearby town of Darnah.

¹⁹ The Middle Palaeolithic is characterised by the emergence of the anatomically modern human (*Homo sapiens*), to whom the Mousterian-Levallois and Aterian productions are accredited, see AL-NOOR, SHALABI 1995, pp. 555-564; BARICH, GARCEA, GIRAUDI 2006; FARR *et al.* 2014.

²⁰ ABUHAJAR 1999, p. 72.

²¹ See BAKIR 1973, pp. 193-197; EL-SAYED GHALIB, EL-GOHARY 1982, pp. 301-304; TALAB 1990, pp. 51-67.

²² On pottery from the sites of Haua Fteah and Abu Tamsa see MCBURNEY 1967, pp. 306-310, and 1971, p. 6; BASEME 1973, p. 151; AL-SHAREEF 1986, p. 245; DE FAUCAMBERGE 2014, pp. 23-30.

²³ The depressions are semi-circular and, following human intervention, become square or rectangular, varying in size. These were used for storing water and grain. I thank al-Said Aljilani, professor of Geography at the Faculty of Letter, University of Benghazi, for the information he gave me in February 2020.



FIG. 12 - Darnah, Museum. Simple one-sided chisel burin on a naturally pointed flake, the latter perhaps reused, from Ras al-Jamal.

Architectonic remains

There are numerous architectonic structures on the site, either square or rectangular in plan and varying in size and height (Fig. 15). Amongst the blocks of stone used in construction there are worked elements and others left unfinished. On the basis of surveys on the site, some structures (three in total) could be small tombs.

The objects which accompany the engravings show humans were present at the site, from the prehistoric period until relatively recent times and, therefore, that the region provided the factors required to guarantee a stable human presence. As regards dating the prehistoric complex, the stone tools would appear to be the most useful elements. In fact, the presence of a blade with knapped edge



FIG. 13 - Ras al-Jamal. Rock cupules ('draughts game').



FIG. 14 - Ras al-Jamal. Small natural depressions on the rocky surface.

(a burin?) could date the earliest occupation to the Upper Palaeolithic (20-12,000 years ago)²⁴.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE ENGRAVINGS

It is important to stress the scientific relevance of the Kirissah region, in which the site of Ras al-Jamal is located, as an area rich in prehistoric finds. Apart from the artefacts described above, including the bladed tool that could date to the Upper Palaeolithic, to which can be added later tools such as the smoothed stone axe²⁵, the pottery and arrow-heads, we cannot ignore the importance of the area of the Jabal Akhdar itself, which includes some of the most famous prehistoric sites in eastern Libya, such as

²⁴ This kind of small stone tool does not have a sharp edge but is grooved. For the dating see INIZAN *et al.* 1995, pp. 77-80.

²⁵ This kind of stone tool is typical of the Neolithic and its presence at Kirissah is a further proof of a stable human presence in the region

during this period. Examples have been found in areas other than that of Ras al-Jamal, indicating the spread of Neolithic culture in most of the region.