Daniel James: "Stepping from Winkler's Shadow: an Analysis of Rock-Art Classification at Dakhleh Oasis"

The aim of this paper is to highlight the problems of a modern use of the rock-art classifications created by Dr Hans Alexander Winkler during his fieldwork in Egypt from 1936 to 1938. This will be achieved through an analysis of the logic by which Winkler classified an anthropomorphic motif in the Dakhleh Oasis: his so-called 'female', 'pregnant female', or 'pregnant goddess' motif. To date no study has adequately taken into account the impact of Winkler's intellectual background, regions of study, and the state of rock-art research within the first half of the twentieth century on his classificatory systems in Egypt. In addition, past and ongoing discussion of this motif fails to question Winkler's classification, with researchers continuing to use his well-established designations. This is despite the fact that Winkler's cultural groupings and interpretations, intrinsically tied to his classifications, are now considered obsolete. The purpose of this research is thus to promote a more objective system of classification that does not, from the onset, incorporate problematic interpretive elements which subsequently impact on motif discussion.

Rudolph Kuper, Heiko Riemer: "The Gilf Kebir National Park – Challenge and Chance for Archaeology"

Situated in the far South-West of Egypt, the Gilf Kebir plateau, was identified by the Egyptian explorer Prince Kemal el Din in 1925. During the 1930s it became the target of many of the early desert explorers: Almas y in 1933, during a joint expedition with Frobenius and Rhotert, discovered in Wadi Sura the famous “Cave of Swimmers”. Systematic archaeological research in the Gilf was first carried out in 1938 by the Mond-Myers-Expedition and was continued in 1978 by William McHugh within the activities of the Geological Survey of Egypt. At the same time the Free University of Berlin started its geological work in this region, followed in 1980 by the University of Cologne with its projects B.O.S. and ACACIA. This still ongoing interdisciplinary archaeological research in the Libyan Desert focussed mainly on the Holocene occupation of Wadi el Akhdar and Wadi Bakht that provided the basic data for a comprehensive outline of the interrelation between climatic change and human occupation during the past 10,000 years. The safety of the Gilf's archaeological features abruptly ended with the introduction of GPS and the consequently growing of desert tourism. The spirit of discovery that guides many tourists promptly resulted into the destruction of countless archaeological sites, but also led in 2004 to the introduction of additional site typologies: we were able to identify a few Acheulean bifaces, several Middle Paleolithic sites, one rich Aterian location, some minor Epipaleolithic evidences and numerous Neolithic sites. The latter comprise tumuli, burial sites, stone circles, megalithic structures, ateliers and rock art, both engravings and paintings. The area has been in use, intermittently, until the first decades of the last Century, when Tebu nomads were still leading their cattle and camels to pasture. While Neolithic and Tebu evidences are located both on the plateau and the wadi bottom, Paleolithic sites, except for isolated findings, show up only on the plateau; this could be the consequence of a series of thick wadi deposits of various ages that may have obliterated such sites. Our poster is aimed at highlighting the archaeological riches of this area, hoping to foster further investigations, as material findings were recorded and left in their original place. The driving motivation of our expeditions was the completion of a detailed survey of this unique area, before the increasing hordes of so-called tourists deplete this unspoiled environment.
Daniela Zampetti: "Iconography and Techniques in the Rock Art of the Tadrart Acacus and Messak Settafet (Libyan Sahara)"

The rock art of the Tadrart Acacus and of the Messak Settafet shares some general features with the rock art of other areas of the central Sahara and of the northern regions of the Maghreb and of Libya. In general the rock art of these countries is connected to the population dynamics and to a series of activities which have changed during prehistoric times: 1. Hunting and fishing activities; 2. Pastoral activities; 3. Trade; 4. Raw materials procurement; 5. Performance of ritual activities. The features of the rock art are strictly connected to this complex relationships between man and territory, so that the actual landscape bears traces of a codified set of images occupying the natural architectures. Open air walls and boulders, shelters and caves reflect the daily life and the cosmology of the human groups who settled in this regions or simply crossed the mountains and their surroundings. As we know, the general picture of the chronologies proposed by the different authors for these areas varies in a meaningful way: from a "long" chronology proposed by F. Mori, who founded our mission, to a "short" one proposed by A. Muzzolini and J.-L. Le Quellec. The last data from the Belgian team working at El-Hosh and Qurta are very intriguing; certainly an improvement of the direct dating techniques will be necessary if we are to have the opportunity to discuss this problem on a wider basis. The stylistic features and the contents remain till now a very important guide to try to define the phases of the rock art activity, even if in a relative way. A topic which could be of interest to increase our knowledge about the origins of some stylistic stereotypes is the relationship between pecked and painted scenes and subjects. In this contribution we deal, in a preliminary way, with "copies" observed during the recent Italo-Libyan joint missions in the Fezzan; some of them are in the so-called "Round Head style" and some in Pastoral or Tazina style. Is there a chronological shift between painted and pecked figures or they simply reflect ephemeral preferences?

Andras Zboray: "Rock art at Gebel Uweinat"

A series of massifs and plateaus occupies the central Libyan Desert (Eastern Sahara) near the convergence of the borders of present-day Egypt, Sudan and Libya. These have long been known to harbour prehistoric rock art. Already in 1923 the Egyptian explorer Ahmed Hassanein noted engravings of wild animals at Jebel Uweinat, which he correctly assumed to be of great antiquity. Subsequent explorers discovered a number of spectacular paintings and engravings, but following the Second World War exploration and interest in the region subsided. Save for a number of sporadic discoveries, until recently no systematic exploration or recording of sites was attempted, and awareness of the sites remain limited even among rock art specialists. The author organised twenty expeditions to the Gilf Kebir plateau and Jebel Uweinat, initially with the modest objective of visiting known and recorded sites. However as familiarity with terrain and sites increased it became apparent, that large unexplored areas promise new discoveries. During the past six years large areas were systematically explored, and over 300 new rock art sites were found. To date, more than 600 sites have been documented and published. A significant aspect of the new finds was the identification of distinct cultural horizons, some unique to localized geographical areas, and some spanning the whole region. Their relative chronology is well established based on over-paintings. Recent paleoclimatic research in the Gilf Kebir offers an opportunity to correlate dated climatic periods with the rock art of the area, providing an absolute chronology for the cultural history of the central Libyan Desert.