

SUB-ZONE 3: NIGER

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This study is based on the ten rock art recording expeditions that TARA, the Trust for African Rock Art, has carried out in Niger starting in 1995, just after the Tuareg rebellion. TARA is an African-based not-for-profit organization (NGO) concerned with the awareness and conservation of Africa's remarkable rock art heritage. Its mission is "To create a greater global awareness of the importance and endangered state of Africa's rock art; to survey sites, monitor status, and be an information resource and archive; and to promote and support rock art conservation measures". Since it was founded in the mid-1990s, the Trust has worked in some 17 different African countries, (eight of them Sahara countries), created an archive of over 50,000 rock art photos, and produced a major illustrated book, "African Rock Art, Printings and Engravings on Stone". Its work has been endorsed by Nelson Mandela and Kofi Annan. TARA has a partnership agreement with UNESCO.

1. *Profile of the Zone:*

The rock art of Niger can be broadly divided into the following five regions:

1. Rock art of the Aïr Massif (Northern Niger). Almost entirely consisting of rock engravings, the majority of this art falls within the so-called Libyan Warrior period/style of art (1,500 to 3,000 BP). This period of art tends to depict horses either with so-called Libyan Warriors with metal weapons, or with chariots and charioteers. Wild animals, such as Barbary sheep and ostrich as well as cattle appear in this art. Chariots first appeared in Africa about 3,700 BP and horses seem to have arrived slightly earlier. Much later the Romans also used chariots in northern Africa as did the warlike Garamantees, as described by Herodotus. It is unlikely that chariots were actually driven along known Saharan routes. Libyan Warriors, who often appear with horses, were sometimes depicted with elaborate apparel and others were drawn with stylized bodies consisting of two triangles joined at the apex (figure 1). The purpose of this art is unknown but may reflect control of areas, property or even control of spirits.
2. Rock paintings and engravings of the Djado Plateau (Eneri Blaka, Eneri Domo, Eneri Tellei [*eneri* = dry river bed]), including the Mangueni and Tchigai plateaus (Northeast Niger). Styles here include Early Hunter (Bubalus) engravings (figure 2), Tazina-style engravings similar to those in south eastern Morocco, and polychrome fine-line and finger paintings which are special to this area.
3. Rock paintings and engravings (figure 3) of Le Kavar, a region with rocky outcrops and cliffs with some ancient fortifications, separating the Tenere from the Great Bilma Plateau to the EastRegion. This includes a chain of little oases.
4. Rock engravings and paintings at Termit (Massif du Termit). No information is available yet on this area.
5. Rock engravings of the Niger River Valley. Engravings are found on islands at Yassan and Kourki.

2. *Links with other Zones:*

1. Aïr Massif. Links exist between the Libyan Warrior art of this region and the rock engravings of the Adrar des Iforas in Mali. Stylistic similarities also exist with some of the art of the Tadrart (Akakus) and in South East Algeria.

2. Djado Plateau. Links exist between the Early Hunter art in this area (e.g. Eneiri Blaka) and art in South West Libya and South East Algeria. There are also links between the Tazina style engravings as in south western Algeria and south eastern Morocco.
3. Le Kavar, Termit and Niger River Valley. There is no information on links as yet.

3. **Known Sites:**

Main sites in the Aïr Massif recorded by TARA (all engraving sites):

Anakom	E. Aïr
Arakao	E. Aïr
Dabous	W. Aïr
Ibel	E. Aïr
Iferouane	N. Aïr
Infisak	E. Aïr
Iwellene	N. Aïr
Mammanet	W. Aïr
Tafidet	E. Aïr
Tadek	N. Aïr
Talatte	E. Aïr
Tanakom	E. Aïr
Tezirzek	E. Aïr
Tirreghamis	N. Aïr

Other sites in the Aïr Massif recorded by TARA (mostly engraving sites):

Akbar	W. Aïr
Aokere Guelta	W. Aïr
Adrar Irsane	N. Aïr
Aza-Ouan Emillal	N.E. Aïr (paintings and engravings)
Egal Airaghe	W. Aïr
Elaulau	W. Aïr
Indakatte	W. Aïr
Inghighi	W. Aïr
Kolo	W. Aïr
Telahlaghe	W. Aïr
Teloues	E. Aïr
Temet	N.E. Aïr (paintings)
Warrior & Lion Sites	E. Aïr

Sites recorded by TARA in Djado Plateau:

Arkena	Engraving (Blaka/Domo confluence)
Djaba	Engraving & Painting
Fidrousso	Paintings
'Submarine' Site	Paintings & Engravings
Tellei	Paintings & Engravings

Other Niger Sites listed in TARA Archives but NOT recorded by TARA:

- Aïr Massif and Djado Plateau:
- Agalala
 - Amezegara (Lhote)
 - Annouin Alhere
 - Aouderer (Lhote)

- Aoukare (Lhote)
- Col de Sara
- El Mekki (Lhote)
- Guelta Domo
- Heraoui
- Ibarara (Lhote)
- Imalret (Lhote)
- I-n-Tehilaline valley (Lhote)
- In Zeynet (Lhote)
- Inalakat
- Isseretagen (Lhote)
- Krib-Krib (Lhote)
- Moradi (Lhote)
- Seorka (Lhote)
- Simsad (Lhote)
- Tadeliza (Lhote)
- Tagalalat
- Tamokrine (Lhote)
- Tassires
- Teguidda-n-Tagait (Lhote)

Le Kawa:

- Bilma Oases Paintings & Engravings

Niger River Valley Engravings:

- Kourki Engravings
- Yassan Engravings

4. *Significant Rock Art Sites, Air Massif and Djado Plateau:*

1. Dabous (figure 6)
2. Iwellene (figures 1 and 7)
3. Tagueit (figure 8)
4. Tirreghamis (figures 4 and 9)
5. Tanakom (figure 10)
6. Tezirzek (figure 11)
7. Mammanet (figure 12)
8. Arkena (figure 13)
9. Tellei (figure 14)
10. Submarine (figure 15)

5. *Documentation:*

Details of sites

(See previous site lists)

Type of records

Site recording forms

Photographic records fully digitized/archived/data-based

Sketches and line drawings

G.P.S. location data

Photographic Records

35 mm and medium format photographs
Digital scans of above
Digital images (shot on digital equipment)
All images databased/archived

Location of Documentation

All of the photographic records produced by TARA are located in the archive at TARA headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

Comparative material available

TARA has comparative materials available in its library and archive including several scientific papers and illustrated books by Muzzolini, Hugot, Striedter and others.

6. Research:

Recording Aïr Massif rock art commenced sporadically in the 1920s with Hon. Francis Rodd, a British explorer and the first person to make a serious study of the Tuareg. French colonial officers noted some sites about 1960. A major recording exercise commenced with Henri Lhote, a French professor and explorer, and his students who recorded, traced and published several thousand engravings. They were followed by Christian Dupuy and J.P. Roset, academic researchers, who recorded and published engravings at Dabous and Iwellene. In 1995, TARA commenced making a fairly systemic photographic record of most major Aïr sites.

In 2000, Alec Campbell, Jean and Renée Clottes, David Coulson, Valérie Feruglio and Yanik Le Guillou recorded in detail the whole of the Dabous site / outcrop (over 800 engravings) during four solid weeks of work. This was a "first" in Niger rock art research.

Relatively little research has been done regarding possible associations to societies past and present, yet since most rock art sites/areas are either uninhabited or only occasionally inhabited by nomadic Tuareg, and since most of the art predates the Tuareg people in this area by centuries, if not millennia, such research is difficult to conduct.

TARA has worked over the years with the Tuareg communities, all of whom say that the rock engravings have always been there. They do not appear to have any direct connections with the art, except that they recognize that the old script which sometimes accompanies images closely resembles their own traditional writing, *Tifinagh*. They cannot however understand this script if it is more than 100 years old.

7. Protection:

Some laws do exist in Niger, having originally been introduced during French colonial times but Nigeriens today are for the most part unaware of their existence. Meanwhile new protective legislation is supposed to be introduced during 2007/8. (Source and Anigourane)

8. Conservation:

A number of measures have been employed to date:

Community involvement

- (a) Encouraging communities to embrace their rock art heritage and protect it.
- (b) Production and distribution of rock art heritage information to local tour operators in Agadez, community leaders in rock art areas and to rock art tourists. This information (in form of brochures) includes a “Code of Conduct” for visitors to rock art sites and a special “Code of Conduct” for tour operators.
- (c) Courses (one so far organized) for tour operators to sensitise them concerning the importance and vulnerability of rock art sites.
- (d) Carrying out a 4 week project in 2006/7 to teach ten Tuareg from the Agadez region how to record, trace and study rock art. This project, funded by the French Embassy in Niger was carried out at Ekarkawi near Dabous, under the supervision of Yannik Le Guillou. Most of the ten Tuareg were employed by local tour agencies and it is hoped that this exercise will have beneficial consequences for the future conservation of rock art in this region.

On-site protection

- (a) Hiring custodians to protect Niger’s No. 1 rock art site.
- (b) Encouraging visitors to physically approach sites in a way less likely to cause damage to engravings.
- (c) Using pieces of local timber to prevent visitors from walking on engravings.
- (d) Keeping records of vehicles and visitors.

Awareness and promotion

Recognizing the threat of increased tourism to the exceptional Dabous Giraffe engravings, and then initiating and carrying out a moulding project in 1999. This project was mostly funded by the Bradshaw Foundation with the help of the National Geographic Society and directed by TARA. One cast is currently displayed in Washington D.C. and another at Agadez International Airport (figure 16).

Pros and Cons of these different approaches

TARA believes that the best, if not the only way to conserve/preserve rock art sites is to sensitize communities living near rock art sites concerning the significance, importance and vulnerability of their rock art heritage and help them to appreciate its value. If they appreciate its value they will want to preserve and protect it. TARA believes that, except for rare cases, rock art cannot and should not be preserved by erecting cages and grids in front of the images. In the case of very important sites, like Dabous, custodians should sometimes be hired.

9. Management:

Main agencies involved

Communities, local tour operators, international tour operators, local rock art organizations/associations such as Anigourane (a community association in partnership with TARA), TARA and the Ministry of Tourism.

Management arrangements

Only one site in Niger has “active management” and that is the “Big Giraffe” site at Dabous. Two custodians are employed (until recently by TARA and now by Anigourane) to help protect

this site. No other site in Niger has custodians yet. There is no water at most sites. The President of Anigourane, Sidi Mohamed Ilies, visits the main sites on a fairly regular basis, keeping an eye on things, yet there is no-one there on a full time basis, except at Dabous.

Do Management Plans exist?

A Management and Conservation Plan for Dabous, funded by the World Monument Fund, was drawn up in 2000, only some of which has been implemented due to lack of funds. A broader plan has been discussed between TARA and Anigourane for the other major sites of the Aïr Massif but has not advanced due to lack of funds.

Traditional Management arrangements

At Dabous, the two custodians live in the riverbed a few hundred metres from the site with their families and goats. Until recently they had to fetch water from a well two kilometres away or from a well 25 kilometres away during the dry months between April and July. TARA and the Bradshaw Foundation has constructed a well which has helped create the conditions whereby the custodians and their families can live near the site.

Links with Local Communities

The only community rock art organization/initiative in Niger is Anigourane which was set up with the help of TARA. Its President, Sidi Mohamed Ilies, a community leader of a major Tuareg clan/area that includes Dabous as well as huge areas of the Aïr Massif. Meanwhile in 2000 TARA organised a training workshop for the Tuareg operators based out of Agadez. This was chaired by the then Minister of Tourism, Ahissa Ag Boula.

Contemporary Use of Sites

TARA is not aware of any contemporary use of sites for traditional, spiritual purposes in Niger, although such usage could exist.

Access Arrangements

- (a) Dabous (western Aïr Massif). This site can be reached by following the tar road to Arlit (132 kms.) and the site is only 7 kms off this road.
- (b) Other main sites in northern and eastern Aïr can be reached using 4 x 4 vehicles within 2-3 days' drive from Agadez.
- (c) Djado Plateau and Le Kavar. Djado can be reached by 4 x 4 vehicles, either via the official road/track from Agadez which leads east to Bilma and Chirfa, or by directly crossing the Tenere desert/valley east of the Aïr Massif. There is no road here so a reliable guide is essential. From Chirfa a track leads one into the Eneri Domo and the Eneri Blaka where the main rock art sites can be found.
- (d) Termit. TARA has not yet visited Termit. Its Tuareg informants have however mentioned rock art sites here. Sidi Mohamed Ilies says he has heard about engravings there but no paintings.
- (f) Niger River Valley. The sites are believed to be accessible from main road along River.

10. Main Threats:

Lack of Management

There is little or no management at most of the rock art sites in Niger.

Uncontrolled/Irresponsible Tourism

Lack of awareness among the Tuareg, especially among Tuareg tour operators who do not

control their tourists adequately at rock art sites is seen as a potential threat. They do not for example stop visitors from walking over engravings and self-drive visitors sometimes drive over engravings through ignorance. Most Tuareg still do not appreciate the importance and potential value from a tourism point of view, nor the vulnerability of this heritage.

Limitations in funding

TARA has tried but so far has not succeeded in raising funds for rock art conservation in Niger. This may be because this part of Africa is frequently in the news on account of security incidents and therefore Niger is regarded (perhaps wrongly) as an area at risk.

11. Conclusions:

TARA has now been working in Niger for around 12 years and over this period has documented many hundreds of engravings at a large number of sites in the Aïr Massif and the Djado Plateau thereby lending validity to its data and its conclusions.

Documentation

The documentation has been both thoroughly and professionally put together and the photographic recording has been done to the highest international standards.

Management and Conservation Problems

Without outside funding there is little hope of the management and conservation situation improving. Yet if funding can be found, the 'Dabous Giraffe' project has already provided a model as to how these sites can be managed and conserved going forward.

Threats

The most serious threats are uncontrolled tourism and state neglect.

Pre-nomination support

Notwithstanding the fact that the Air and Tenere Natural Reserve have been listed as natural heritage (and on the list of endangered heritage since 1992) there is clearly a valid case for some of the rock art sites in the broader region to be considered for World Heritage status as cultural or mixed sites. Considerable support would be needed to get the nomination process started, for documentation, research and management.

World Heritage site - Potential of Zone

See above.

Recommendations for the future

We have identified five general recommendations which would help to ensure the conservation and promotion of this remarkable heritage for the future:

- a) A national awareness campaign focusing particularly on relevant government departments and on the Tuareg community in Agadez and the north.
- b) Training courses for Tuareg tour operators.
- c) Printed information for visitors.
- d) A rock art conservation and management plan for the entire Aïr and Djado region.
- e) If resources could be found, recruit and train a consultant to work under guidance of TARA/Anigourane on training programmes.

See illustrations Annex II p. 171

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