

DAKHLEH OASIS: RESEARCH ON ROCK ART, 1992

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The research on rock art in Dakhleh Oasis, the Western Desert of Egypt, was continued in February and March, 1992.¹ and was a follow-up on fieldwork carried out during the two previous campaigns.² It was then decided to continue the recording of sites and individual petroglyphs localized earlier in the eastern part of the Oasis.

The fieldwork was carried out in arbitrarily selected square 61-39/E3, measuring some 900 x 900 m. Altogether 10 sites (E3/9-18) were recorded in detail; two more sites numbered D3/1 and 2, situated just outside the limits of the square, but in the same geomorphological settings as those found there, were also recorded. Typically of the rock art found in the Oasis, the sites were usually composed of several groupings of petroglyphs and these in turn consisted of a number of individual petroglyphs.

¹ The fieldwork was carried out by Lech Krzyżaniak and Dr. Karla Kroeper from the Petroglyph Unit, which acts as part of the multidisciplinary Expedition of the Dakhleh Oasis Project directed by Prof. Anthony J. Mills, to whom the members of the Unit wish to express their gratitude.

² Cf. L. Krzyżaniak, Dakhleh Oasis Project: research on the petroglyphs 1990, *PAM* II, 1989-1990 (1991), pp. 60-64; id., Dakhleh Oasis Project: Interim report on the first season of the recording of petroglyphs January/February 1988, *The Journal of the Society for Study of Egyptian Antiquities* 17(4), 1987, pp. 182-191; L. Krzyżaniak, K. Kroeper, A face-mask in the prehistoric rock art of the Dakhleh Oasis?, *Archéo-Nil* 1, 1001, pp. 50-61.

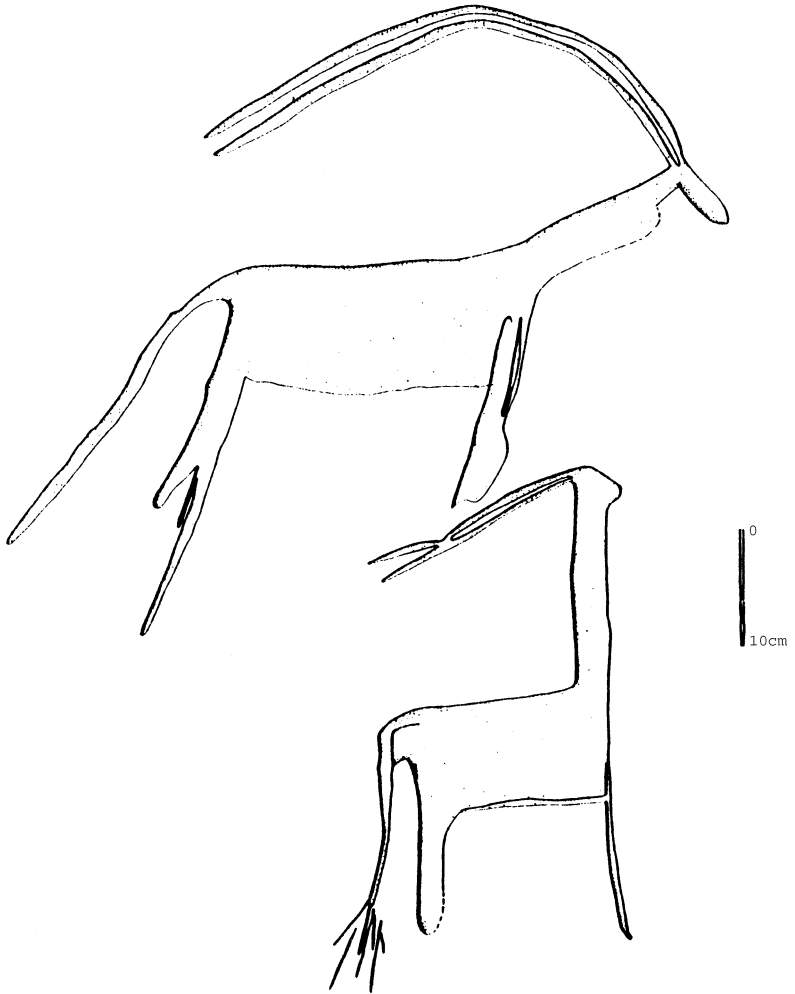


Fig. 1. Dakhleh Oasis. Drawings of two antelopes at site 61-39/D3/1-B.

As was the practice in previous seasons, the recording of sites consisted of their detailed description on catalogue sheets and a general photographic record of the site/hill. Groupings and individual petroglyphs were also described in detail on catalogue sheets, traced on transparent film and aluminum foil, and photographed if the need arose (most of the petroglyphs in the square we were working in had been photographed already in the first season in 1987).

Almost all the recorded petroglyphs could be ascribed, in terms of style, to the "Earliest Hunters" and "Early Oasis Dwellers" stylistic units defined for the rock art of the Oasis already fifty years ago.³ Some of these petroglyphs are distinguished by their high artistic quality. (Fig. 1) The relative chronology of the Dakhleh rock art and the archaeological evidence yielded by habitation sites excavated by another unit of the Dakhleh Oasis Project's expedition close to our square seem to point to the Middle (5th-4th millennium BC) and perhaps also to the Early Holocene (10th-6th millennium BC), as the most probable period for the execution of these petroglyphs.

As a result of this season's fieldwork, all the petroglyphs in the square were recorded, making the square a sample of evidence and a database for research on different aspects of the rock art in the Oasis, including typology, chronology and cultural interpretation.

³ H.A. Winkler, *Rock-Drawings of Southern Upper Egypt*, vol. II, London 1939, Egypt Exploration Society, passim.