

JOURNAL 49
 Namibia Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft / Namibia Scientific Society
 Windhoek, Namibia 2001
 ISSN: 1018-7677

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE ROCK ENGRAVINGS OF FREIHEIT OST (No. 80), WITVLEI, NAMIBIA

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Introduction

The rock engravings of Freiheit Ost (No. 80) were recorded during the week of 10-15 April 2000. The objectives of the field work at the farm were to locate the art, assess the condition, record and describe them. The final product of the project would be developed guidelines for the management, presentation and access of the sites by visitors. The fieldwork also aimed at observing the active and possible causes of decay of the engravings. The work was done under the National Monuments Council Permit number 5/99. This preliminary report contains observations made during the fieldwork.

Research Area

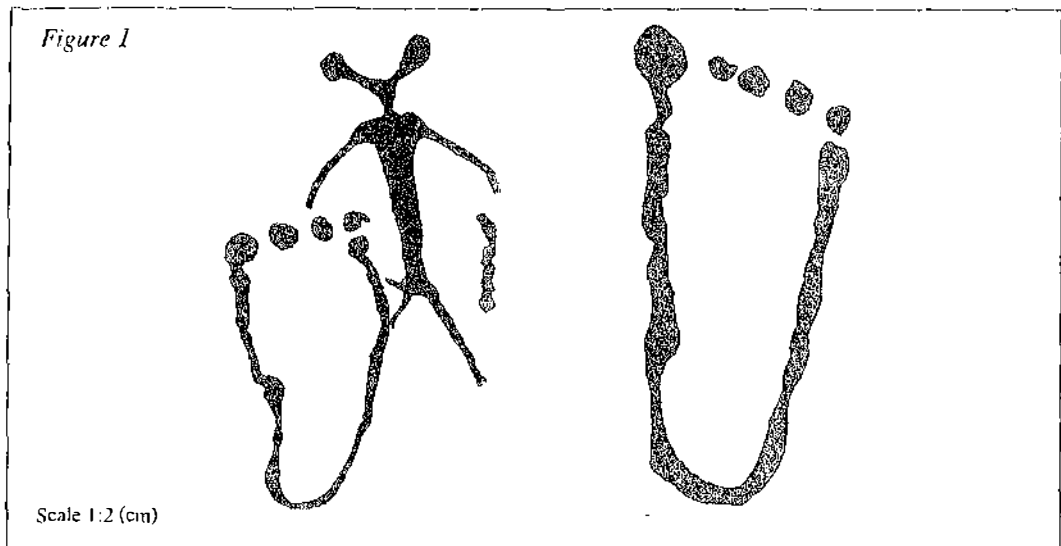
The farm Freiheit Ost is situated 16km south of Witvlei. Sporadic features of felspathic quartzite belonging to the Kamtsa formation of the Damara sequence are a common occurrence in the area. All the engravings observed so far are executed on the flat outcrops of the Quartzite. The rock platforms appear to be exposed by the wind erosion of the Kalahari sands. The White Nossob River runs through the farm almost at the middle. Other rocks that appear on the farm include chalcedony. Vegetation is mainly savanna.

Five sites with engravings have been recorded on the Museum rock art site index and condition survey. The farm is believed to have more sites and they will be identified at a later stage. Only three of the five sites that were located during this reconnaissance were documented. Contrary to the engravings found at Twyfelfontein, which are done mostly on upright boulders (Gwasira 2000), the Freiheit Ost engravings are executed on flat lying rock outcrops. It is premature to claim to have documented these sites fully because it is very easy to omit some engravings due to either lack of enough or too much sunlight. In this case some engravings were not traced because they are too indistinct although there is still some evidence of their presence. The criterion used to select the sites to be documented was informed by their degree of exposure to artificial forms of deterioration. Thus only sites that were found to be exposed to factors of deterioration were documented. Sites FHT1, FHT2 and FHT3 (that were documented) lie within the existing hiking

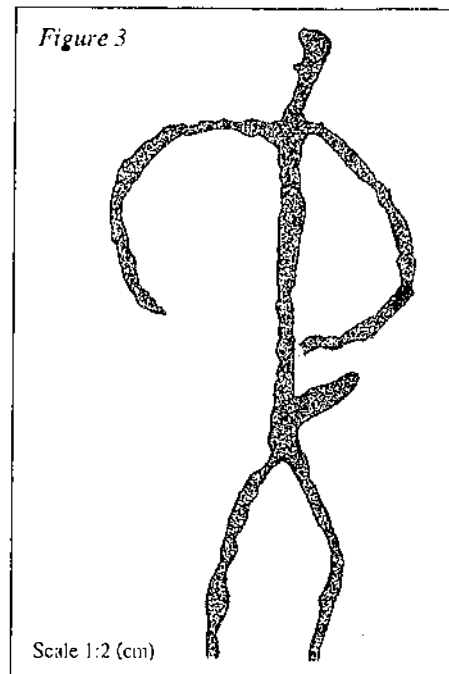
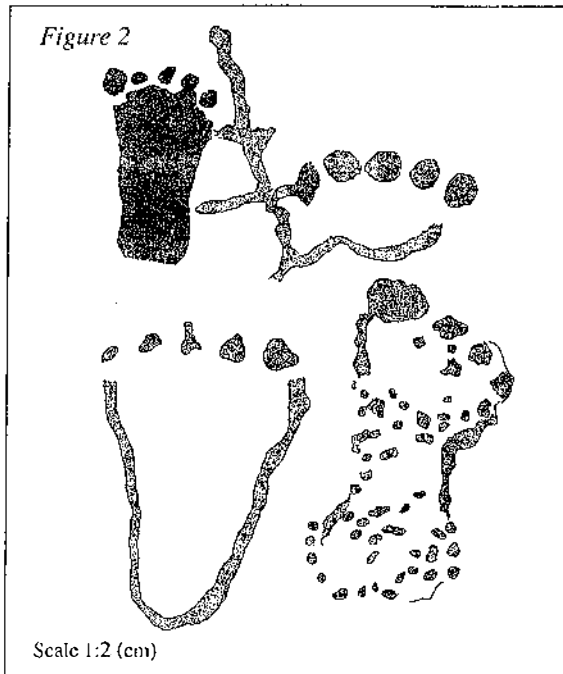
trail and they face possible danger from visitors walking on them and even being worn out by horse shoes, since some visitors prefer horse riding to walking (Mr. P.W. Blaauw, Personal Communication). Nevertheless the precise positions of the other two sites were recorded using hand held Global Positioning System. This report focuses on the documented sites.

FHT1

The first site FHT1 is located 9.6 km from the turnoff in Witvlei and approximately 1 km from the entrance into Farm Freiheit Ost. The site begins right at the edge of the farm road on some quartzite outcrop. The site consists of two distinct panels that are separated by an open space of 4.5m, the larger is referred to as the main panel and the smaller- panel 1. The flat rock outcrop measures 23 metres in length by 9 metres in breadth. Two methods of engraving can be observed at the site. The one involves outlining the figure that is followed by removal of the rock cortex inside the outline (mostly on human figures), but in some cases (animals) the cortex was not removed. In some cases these fit the classification of scrapped offered by Dowson (1992:1) but some have only deep outlines of the intended motif and the cortex not removed. The second method observed at the site is that of incisions into the rock surface. The incisions are mostly in the form of circles and other shapes (see figure 1). There are some distinct human figures on this



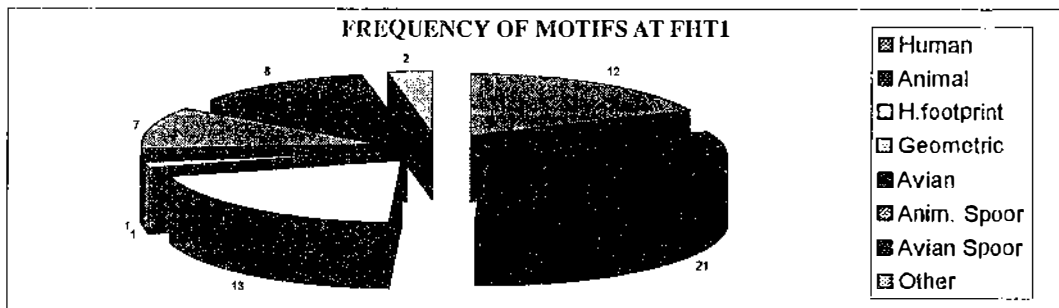
site. The complete human figures are associated with human footprints. Human footprints are common in rock engravings (Dowson 1992) but what is interesting and possibly unique about these human footprints is that in some cases it is easy to distinguish whether it is the right or left foot that was depicted and are engraved next to complete human figures (see figure 2). The toes are generally the deeper section of the foot. What is more striking at FHT1 is that with some of the human figures one can actually identify the gender of the human figures engraved (figure 3, see also Scherz 1970: Tafel 7). The depiction of obvious male genitalia is commonly documented for on paintings and not in engravings.



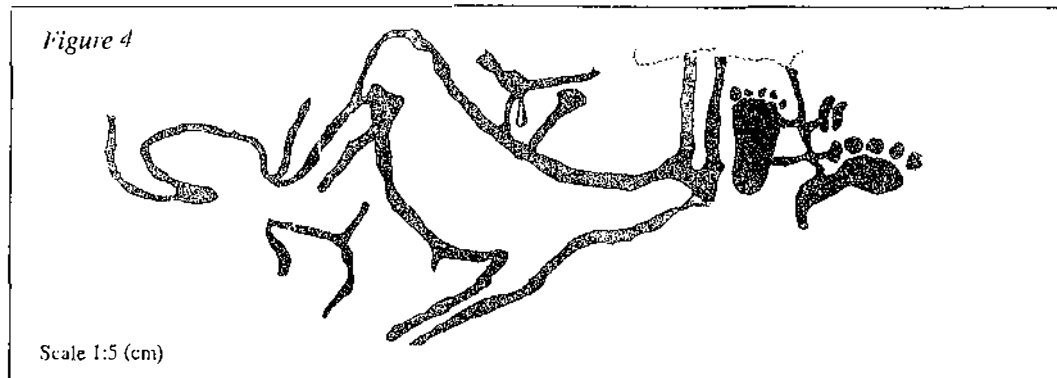
The table and chart below represent only the visible engravings that could be discerned. Where it was evident that an engraving once existed but is now too faint to be properly identified it was decided only to take note of the possible existence but such engravings were not included in the following analysis.

Table 1: Frequency of Motifs at FHT 1:

	Human	Animal	H. footprint	Geometric	Avian	Animal Spoor	Avian Spoor	Other
Main Panel	4	18	6	1	1	7	8	2
Panel I	8	3	7	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	12	21	13	1	1	7	8	2



Among the identifiable animal species were kudu, giraffe, ostrich and eland. The animal spoor category comprises of the baboon or monkey, antelope but these are dominated by the feline such as lion and possibly leopard. Of interest are the eland with an exaggerated dewlap and the feline spoor on a loose panel (*Figure 4*).

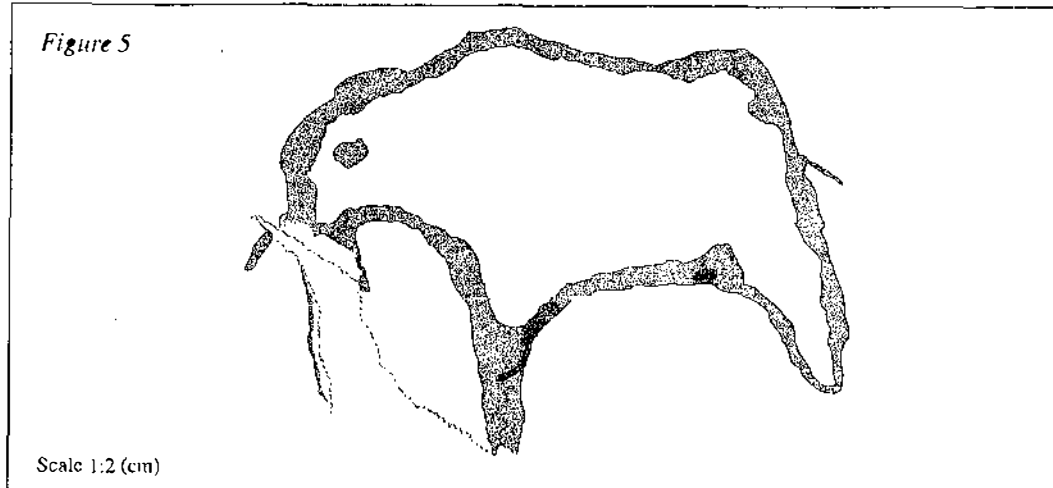


The main panel consists of seven engraved sections with the largest figure, the eland, almost central. The engravings on this panel are restricted to the northeastern section of the outcrop. All the engravings are executed on the main outcrop except for one panel that is loose. The loose section is on the southernmost section of the main panel and has animal spoor engraved on it.

Panel 1 is the southern most of the two panels at FHT1. They are separated by a space of about 4.5 metres that was overgrown at the time of recording. The engravings on panel 1 are restricted to the lower 1.3m of the panel and facing south. This particular panel has been affected by lichen. The green lichen has grown on the whole panel but is more evident on engraved parts making them look older than the engravings on the main panel. The technique of engraving whereby the images are outlined before the patina was removed can be observed on both panels of site 1.

FHT2

The second site FHT2 is located about 50 metres south west of site 1. The site is the smallest of the three sites recorded during this season, measuring 5m x 3m, but is regarded as the most endangered. The hiking trail runs through the bottom end of the site and directly over some art including a huge elephant engraving. The elephant is not visible in the early hours of the morning and there is a great possibility that hikers can tread on. From mid afternoon, however, the engraving becomes visible from at least ten metres away. All figures that were clear were traced at this site but there are others that could not be identified. It is also possible that those that were not recorded were not visible during the time of the day that work took place. However, the question of visibility was taken into account and the sites were visited at different times of the day to ascertain visibility of figures. The figures recorded at site FHT2 include three animals of which two were interesting. The Elephant (*see fig.5*) is 0.66m long from tusk to tail, 0.44m tall from head to toe and the trunk is 0.18m long. The other animal that is clearly illustrated at this site is the giraffe but this one giraffe is not complete. There is heavy emphasis of the back line that is deeply engraved. The head is clearly engraved as well but the mouth and nose are missing possibly due to exfoliation.



One can read the meaning of this giraffe as representing the rain snake (see Kinahan 1996). If one concentrates on the head and spine the giraffe resembles a snake with ears. Human figures are also common at this site although only two could be traced. The humans depicted at FHT2 resemble those from FHT 1 and in some cases is a combination of human bodies with animal like heads also known as anthropomorphic figures. The animal spoors that are present at this site include feline and antelopes, probably springbok.

FHT 3

Located approximately 100 metres west of FHT2 is the third site to be recorded during this season. The site has a walking trail that runs through some engraved sections. Further examination of the site will be aimed at suggesting redirecting of the walking trail so that it avoids engraved areas. The site covers the area of 37m x 11m making it the largest of the three described in this report. Human engravings are also present at this site. Only a few tracings were made from this site. The next field season planned for May-June 2001 will commence from this site and spread to other parts of the farm to locate and record more sites.

Discussion

Library research has revealed that the rock art of Freiheit Ost was known from as early as at least 1970. Some of it was traced and published by Scherz in 1970. Scherz (1970) publication indicates that rock engravings are common in Witvlei and its surroundings but with regard to Freiheit Ost the report indicates only a site on the western side of the White Nossob River. All the three sites described in this report are located on the same side with the one recorded by Scherz. It is also possible to infer from the Scherz' publication that one of the sites described in 1970 is what we have designated as FHT1 (Scherz 1970:95). The other two sites, however, do not appear in the publication of Scherz' survey despite their proximity to FHT1. This report does not claim to be the first record of rock engravings from Freiheit Ost, but rather aims at working towards producing sound conservation and a management plan for the sites and a precise locational database for the sites on the farm. The project will, however, investigate the southern bank of the White Nossob

River that does not appear in the Scherz documentation. It is also important to emphasize here that interpretation of the rock art at Freiheit Ost can only be achieved after a thorough investigation of all the sites at the farm. The content and structure of the engravings has to be understood first before an attempt at interpretation is made (Lewis-Williams 1981, Milstreu 1992) and therefore it is important to know the spatial distribution of the engravings as well. Three more sites were identified during this reconnaissance but it is believed that there could be more sites on the farm.

To assess the condition of the engravings a site record and conservation form was developed and the information obtained from the recording process was then reduced to three indices. The classification scheme for conditions was based on the work that Jeanette Deacon and her team that produced the "Management Guidelines for rock art sites in the wilderness areas in the Western Cape," 1993. Use was also made of information on practices from other parts of the world such as Australia (Rowland, 1999), the USA (Swartz, 1997) and Italy (Milstreu, 1992) to improve the museum site record form and also make the data collected comparable at regional and international levels.

All sites surveyed during this reconnaissance are exposed to the sunlight all day. Some engravings are not visible at certain times of the day and are susceptible to damage by people walking on them. A recently engraved letter X was identified at FHT1. The letter stands out from all the other engravings because it is still fresh. It has been tentatively classified as graffiti. The vegetation that grows either directly or too close to the engraved areas threatens sites FHT2 and FHT3.

By consulting the department, Mr. Blaauw acknowledged the importance of human or cultural history in tourism. Rock art is protected by the National Monuments Act of 1969. However, since the national body that coordinates the conservation is understaffed, rock art on private land generally survives on the responsibility of individual land owners. Rock art conservation experts generally accept that methods of conservation are site specific thus methods borrowed from other sites have to be studied thoroughly before being implemented. In respect to Freiheit Ost, thorough consultations with fellow practitioners both at regional and international level were conducted. Recent surveys of rock art deterioration in Namibia indicate that the human element is responsible for the fast pace of deterioration that is taking place now. Culture tourism is fast catching up with the traditional tourism that focuses on natural heritage in the wild. It is therefore important that all archaeological sites that have some tourism potential are surveyed and documented properly before being opened to visitors. Some form of conservation and management plan should be drawn for such sites and it must be informed by the specific conservation concerns that are apparent at particular sites

In conclusion, the rock engravings of Farm Freiheit Ost (No. 80) have a scientific potential. They can be used as a first step towards studying the general content of engravings in the eastern region of the country, which can then be compared with those from the central Namib such as Twyfelfontein. This will form an interesting study aimed at finding out whether there were some similarities in the engraving traditions, that, is in techniques of engraving and motifs from the two different regions of Namibia. A management and conservation plan for the farm's engravings is a priority case because they are already open to tourists.

Acknowledgements

This project was initiated in January 2000 after the owner of farm Freiheit Ost, Mr. Pierre Blaauw, had consulted the Archaeology Laboratory about possible rock engravings on his property. Mr. Blaauw wanted advice on how the rock engravings could be conserved before being incorporated in the tourism that takes place at farm Freiheit Ost. We would like to express our gratitude to Mr. Kayele Kambombo for accommodating us during the field trip. Many thanks go to Mr. P. Blaauw for inviting us and for his hospitality. The field-work was fully funded by the National Museum of Namibia.

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Biography



Born in 1971 in Chipinge, a remote corner of the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe, **Goodman Gwasira** completed Cambridge Advanced Level in 1989. For adventure's sake he migrated to Namibia in 1993 and studied History and Archaeology at the University of Namibia. After Graduating with a BA at Unam he joined the University of Cape Town where he obtained a BA (Hons.) in Archaeology. He is currently writing up his MA thesis on the Middle Stone Age sites on the West Coast of South Africa. He is the curator of Archaeology at the National Museum of Namibia.



Betel Betuel Katjijeko was born in Windhoek in 1965. Has been working for the Museum for ten years during which he has attended many regional and international courses offered by ICCROM on museum conservation. He has worked as a technical assistant for the Department of Mammalogy before transferring to the Archaeology Laboratory in 2000. His interests include rock art documentation and conservation of faunal remains.



Foustina Kambombo joined the in service training programme for technical assistants of the National Museum of Namibia in 1999. She has since then been on a further training programme for technicians at Robben Island. She has been formally employed at the National Museum since March 2000 and has been on various regional (ICCROM) training courses for museum technicians. She was born at Epinga in Ohangwena region in 1956.