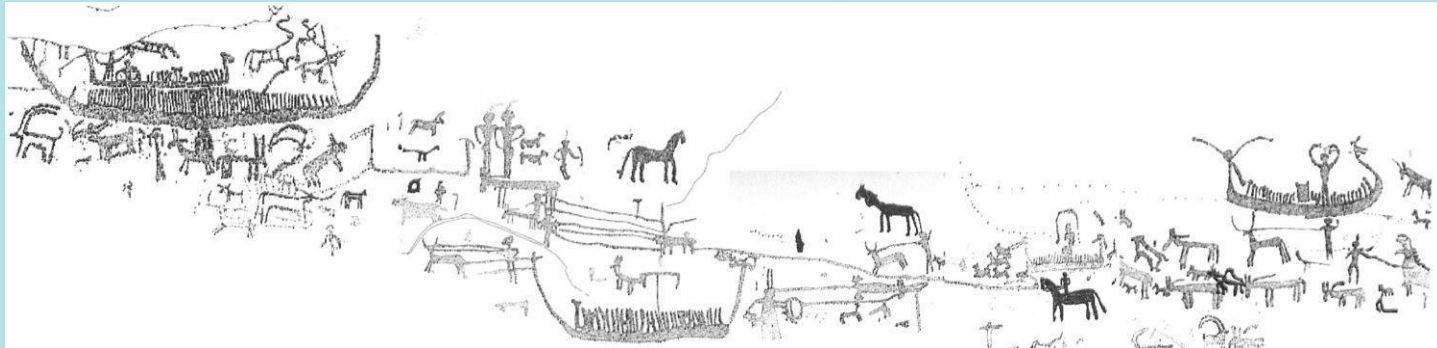
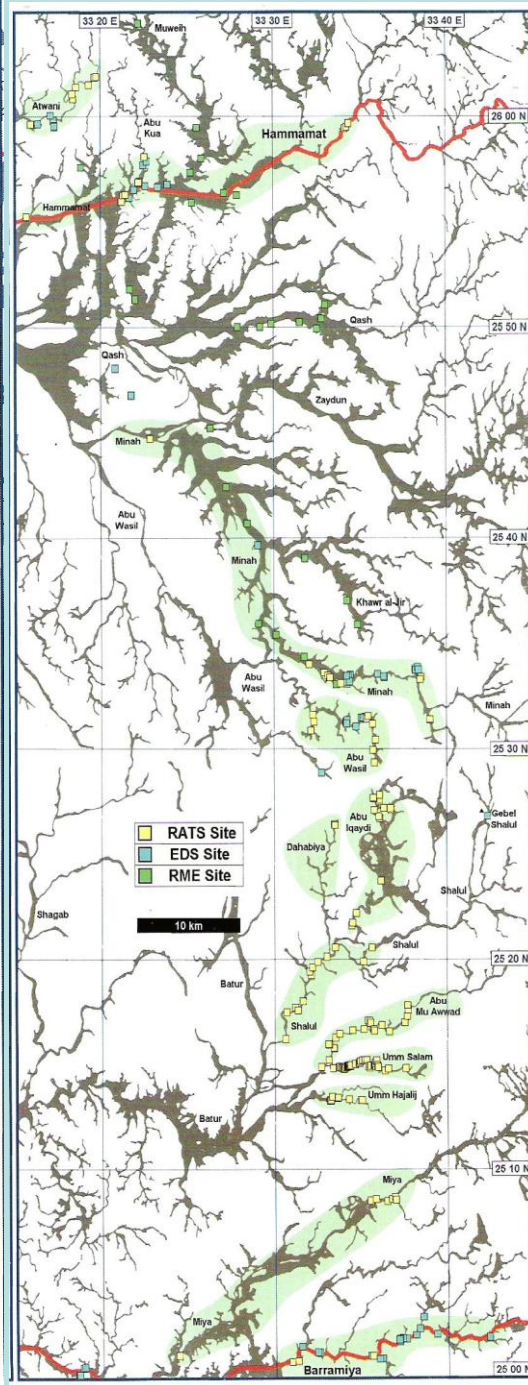
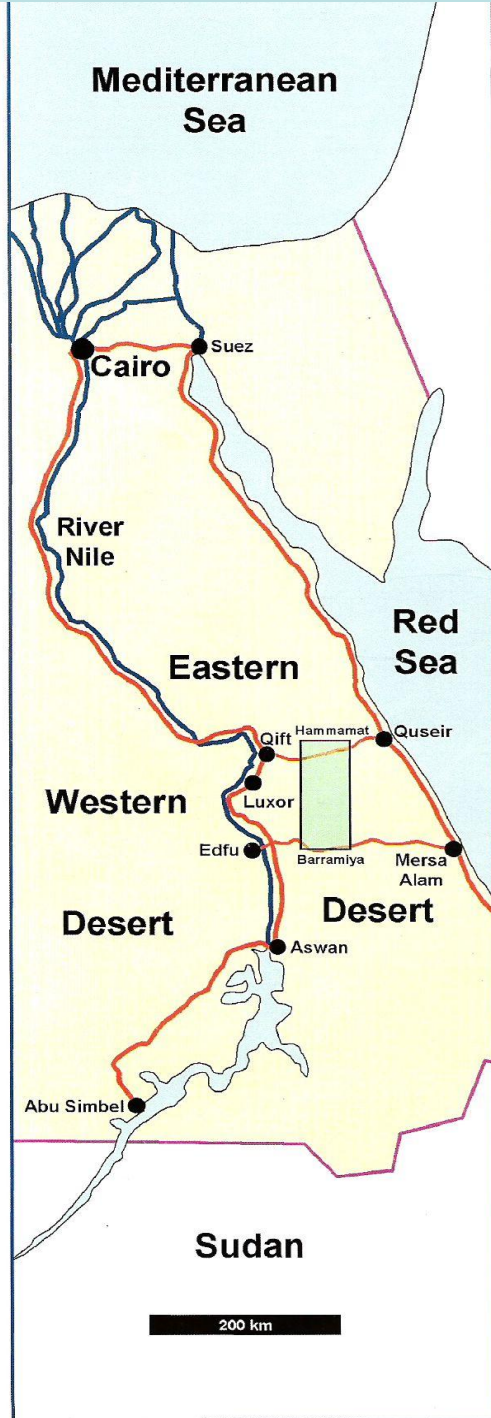


# Rock Art in Egypt's Eastern Desert



**Francis Lankester; graduate student  
University of Durham, UK**

**With thanks to Penny Wilson, Margarita Diaz-Andreu, Andie Byrnes, Cheryl Hanson, Dirk Huyge, Gwenola Graff, Tony Judd, Aude Van Craeynest & AWT.**



# Rock Art-The 'Eastern Desert'

## Survey area-

- 125 km by 50 km
- 6,250 sq km-3% of Eastern Desert
- 25° 00' to 26° 05' N & 33° 15' to 33° 45' E
- Sandstone range angled NNW to SSE

# The Surveys

- **Eastern Desert Survey (Followers of Horus) 2000 D.Rohl**
- **Rock Art Topographical Survey (RATS) 2002 Morrow & Morrow**

**Inspired by**

- **Weigall (1909) Wadi Hammamat-north, & Kanais-south**
- **Winkler (1938) Robert Mond Expedition-north & centre**
- **Fuchs (1989/1991) Wadi Baramiya-south**

**100 sites re-recorded + 120 new sites in EDS/RATS**

**+ Unpublished MA dissertation, Van Craeynest, based on 4-day survey in Wadi Baramiya  
(2004)**

**(Adds 22 sites, 31 boats, 1 elephant, 2 crocodiles, 6 giraffe, 21 asses,  
31 dogs, 48 ostriches, 48 cattle, 53 ibex, 36 human figures)**

# The Desert Wadis



**Atwani (north)**



**Qash (north)**



**Abu Mu Awad-Shalul  
(south/central)**



**Umm Salam (south)**





**Evidence of rainfall-Wadi Qash**



**Rock pool: Wadi Umm Salam**



**Wadi Abu Wasil**



photo courtesy of Andie Byrnes

**\* Climate moister until 3500 BC; then increased aridity**



**Gourd picking**



**Desert traders**



**Traders' merchandise**



**Ababda encampment**





**Routes through the wadis  
taken by the survey teams**

## **North/Central/ Southern routes**

- **North: Wadi Hamammat route to gold mines and quarries, & Red Sea.**
- **Centre: Gebel & Bir Shalul.**
- **South: Wadi Baramiya route to gold mines & Red Sea.**

**\*Rock art mixed Late/Predynastic Pharaonic/ especially in Wadis Hamammat and Baramiya, with less rock-art and fewer predynastic motifs in central Wadis Iqaydi and Shalul**



- Only one painted in whole ED (with pigment from rock underneath) in Wadi Hamammat-north
- Similar to Tomb 100?



# Rock Art Evidence-South of Baramiya



(Photo courtesy AWT)



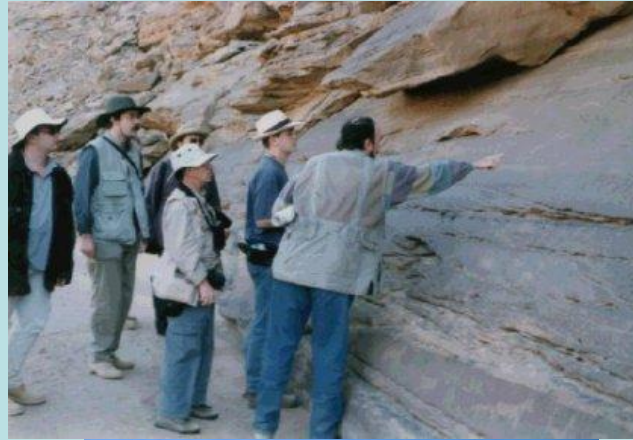
(Other photos courtesy Cheryl Hanson)



- **Similar motifs in the Kom Ombo Drainage Basin (unpublished)**
- **About 100 sites recorded & perhaps another 50+ remain unrecorded**

# Site Heights

- **Low**  
**(1-5 metres): 85%**



- **Medium**  
**(6-10 metres): 7.5%**



- **High**  
**(11+ metres): 7.5%**



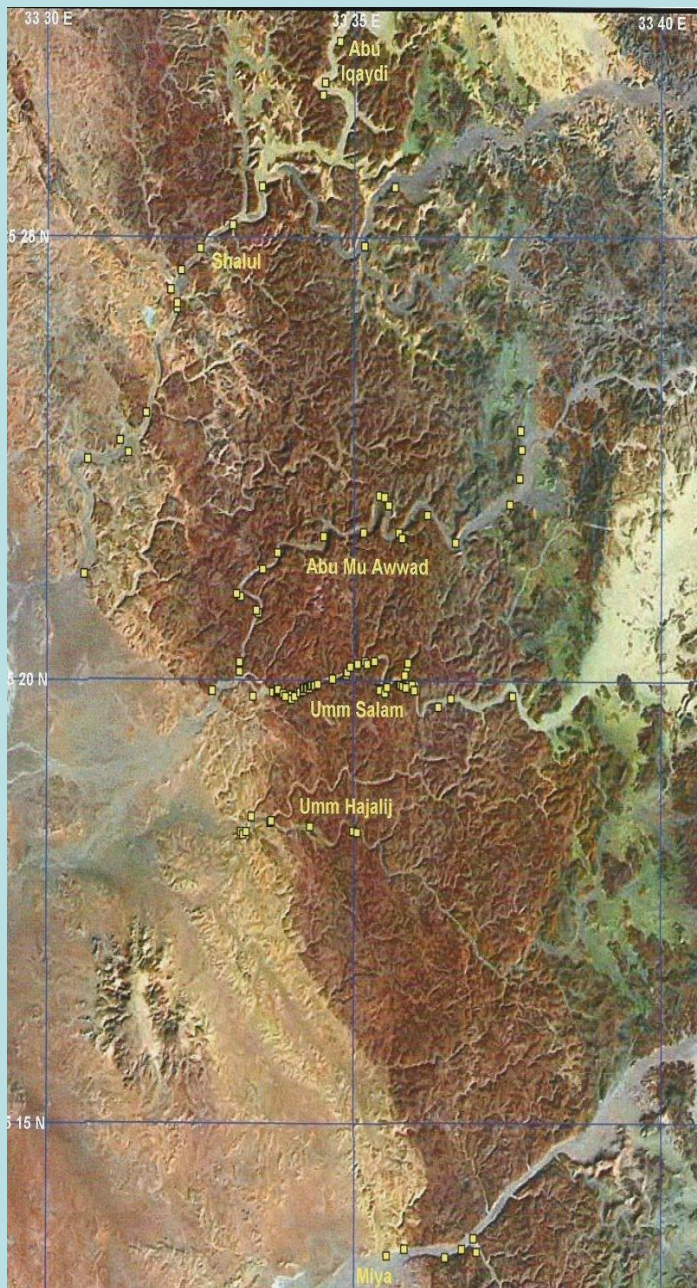




## Wadi Umm Salam-south

Egyptian Eastern Desert Rock Art Survey (Sample Form)									
<b>Site Location</b>									
GPS Co-ordinates:		N	25	59	54	Survey Site Number: DR-8			
		E	33	17	46				
Orientation (Facing Direction):		SE				Other Site Nos: RME 100			
Location Description:		WADI ARRADA. 500 METRES ALONG ON NORTH SIDE OF SMALL UNNAMED WADI RUNNING NE FROM MAIN WADI ARRADA, ABOUT 4 KM EAST FROM ITS JUNCTION WITH WADI BAHRA.							
Site Description:		LARGE HOLLOW IN AN OBVIOUS SANDSTONE CLIFF FACE WITH TWO MASSIVE BOULDERS IN FRONT AND TO RIGHT HAND SIDE. ROCK ART ON CLIFF FACE TO LEFT SIDE OF HOLLOW.							
Site Width (Metres):		6		Height Above Wadi (Metres)		Bottom:		9 Top: 6	
Photographer:		D. BAILEY		Film Nos:		5 & 6		Photo Nos: 34-36 & 1-7	
Recorder:		THOTH		Team:		1		Date: 25/12/99 Time: 13:30	
<b>Boats</b> (Enter a number or a tick if present)									
	Sickle	Incurved Sickle	Square	Incurved Square	Other				
Number	1		3	1					
Figures - Large									
Crew - Small			✓						
Oars - Rowing									
Oars - Steering	✓								
Cabins	✓		✓						
Mast/Totem Pole									
Pennants			✓						
Sail									
Towed			✓						
<b>Figures</b> (Enter a number or a tick if present)									
	Number	Raised Arms	Clothing	Head Plumes	Penis Sheath	Bull's Tail	Other		
Male	11					✓			
Female	1	✓	✓				? MAN WITH DUAL CROWN		
<b>Weapons</b> (Enter a tick if present)									
	Bow	Club	Mace	Staff	Throw Stick	Lasso	Other		
				✓		✓			
<b>Animals</b> (Enter a tick if present)									
	Elephant		Bull/Cow		✓	Ostrich			
	Giraffe	✓	Ass			Falcon			
	Hippopotamus	✓	Camel		✓	Bird			
	Lion		Dog			Other			
	Antelope/Gazelle	✓	Horse						
	Ibex		Crocodile		✓				
<b>Inscriptions</b> (Enter a tick if present)									
	Hieroglyphic	Greek	Latin	Arabic	Misc. Signs	Other			
	✓				✓				
<b>Other Observations</b> TWO SQUARE BOATS BEING TOWED. MAN LASSOING HIPPOPOTAMUS! MAN CARRYING HEKA STAFF AND PERHAPS WEARING DUAL CROWN. MANY OTHER INDISTINCT AND OVERLAID BOATS.									
Please turn over and draw rough sketches of boats and other important features.									





**Southern section**

## **Why are most sites ‘Low?’**

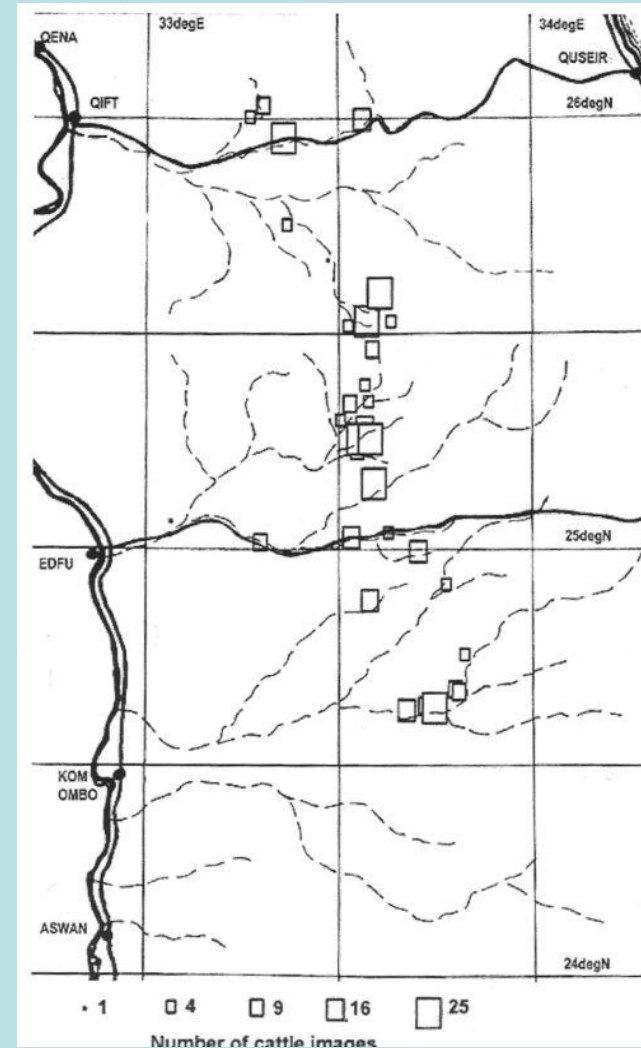
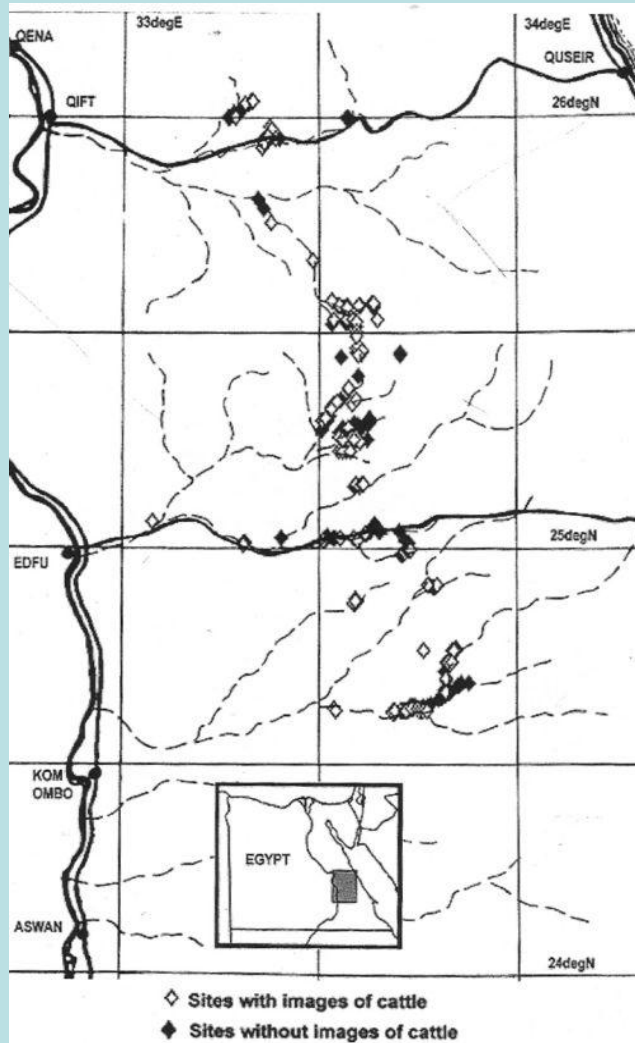
- narrow West-East wadis
- wadi walls hard to climb
- most suitable rock faces at low level
- many sites on smooth face reached by sand ramp or small boulders

**(Sites end part way along wadis-esp. Umm Salam because rock becomes unsuitable & vegetation disappears)**

## Animal Depictions (not all Predynastic)

Animal	Sites	Geog.Bias?	No. Animal
Crocodile	16 (14?)	South/Nor?	31(15?)
Hippo	24	South	29
Elephant	37	Even	59
Ass	19	South	44
Giraffe	44	South	83
Ostrich	84	South/Cent	368
Dog	88	South/Cent	277
Cattle	89	Centre	224+
Ibex	136	Even	1000+

# Cattle



Judd (2006)



# Later vs. Predynastic Images



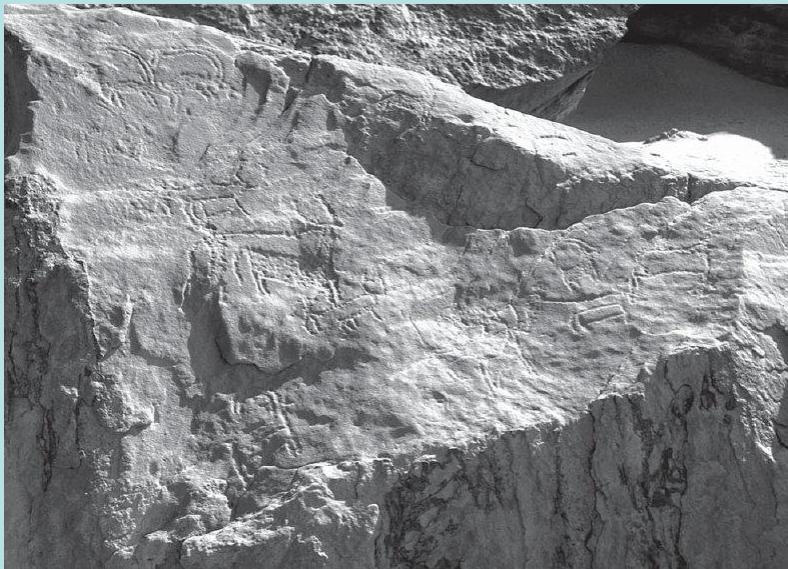
# **‘Control’**



**QAS-2 (RME-18)**



**BAR-12**



**MUA-3**

- cattle at 40% of sites
- 63% of cattle petroglyphs are singletons
- ‘control’ at 24 sites
- 4 bovids controlled at MUA-3 is the largest group
- only 5 sites with multiple ‘control’-2/2/4/1+1/1+1 bovids each



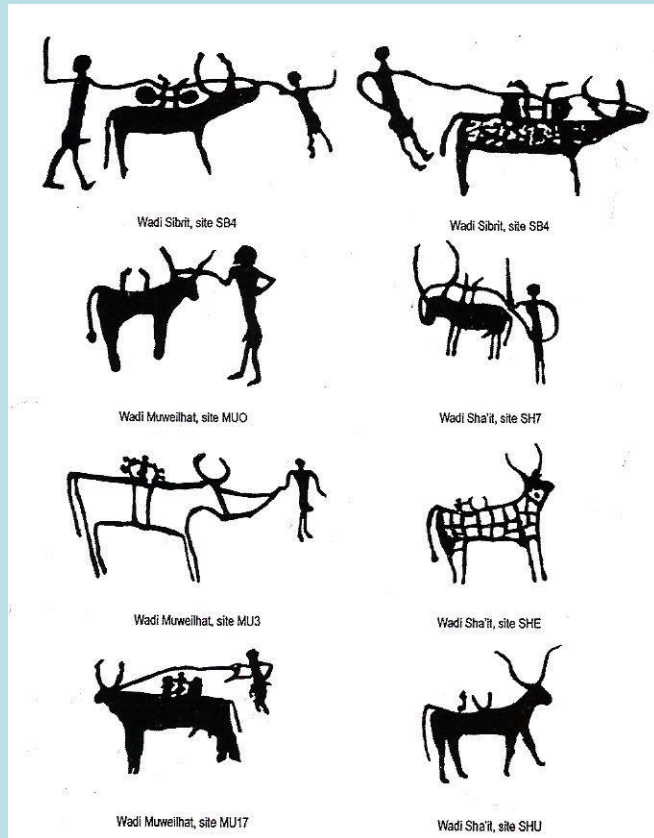
# Saharan Comparison



**Iheren** (Holl, Saharan Rock Art, Archaeology of Tassilian Pastoralist Iconography, 2004, Altamira Press.

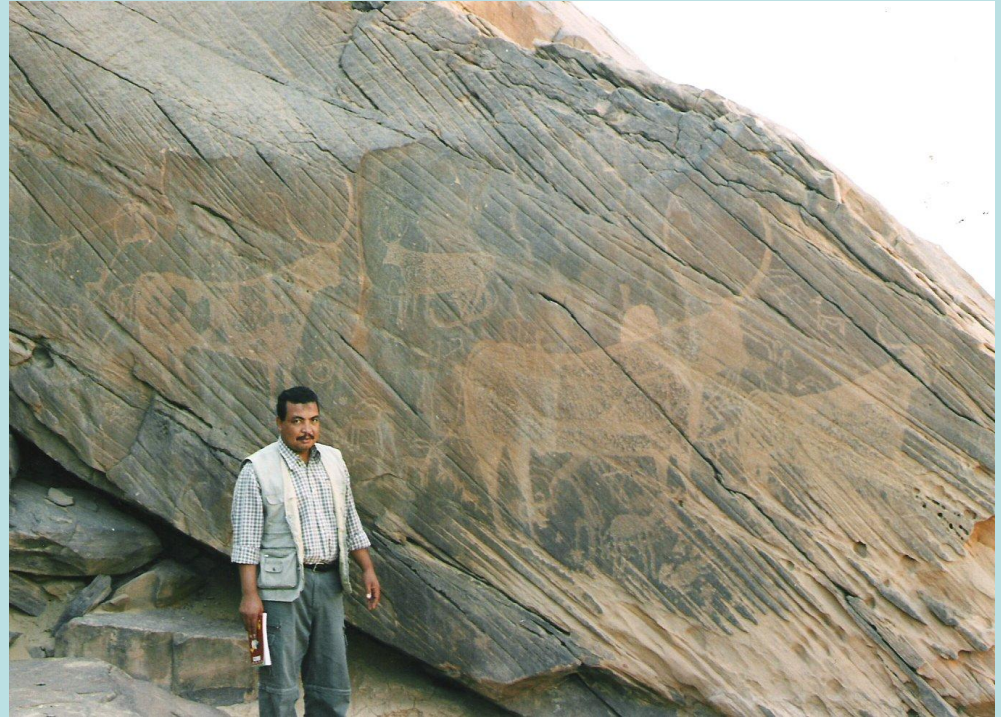


# Cattle-south of Baramiya



**Structures on cattle backs  
only south of Baramiya**

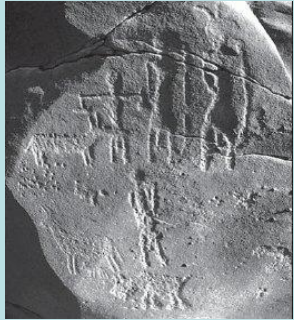
(Judd, 2006)



**Cattle motifs Wadi Midriq**

(photo courtesy Cheryl Hanson)

# Hunting



**3 'family' groups**



**36 direct attacks**



**Later hunting scene**



**Added ibex**

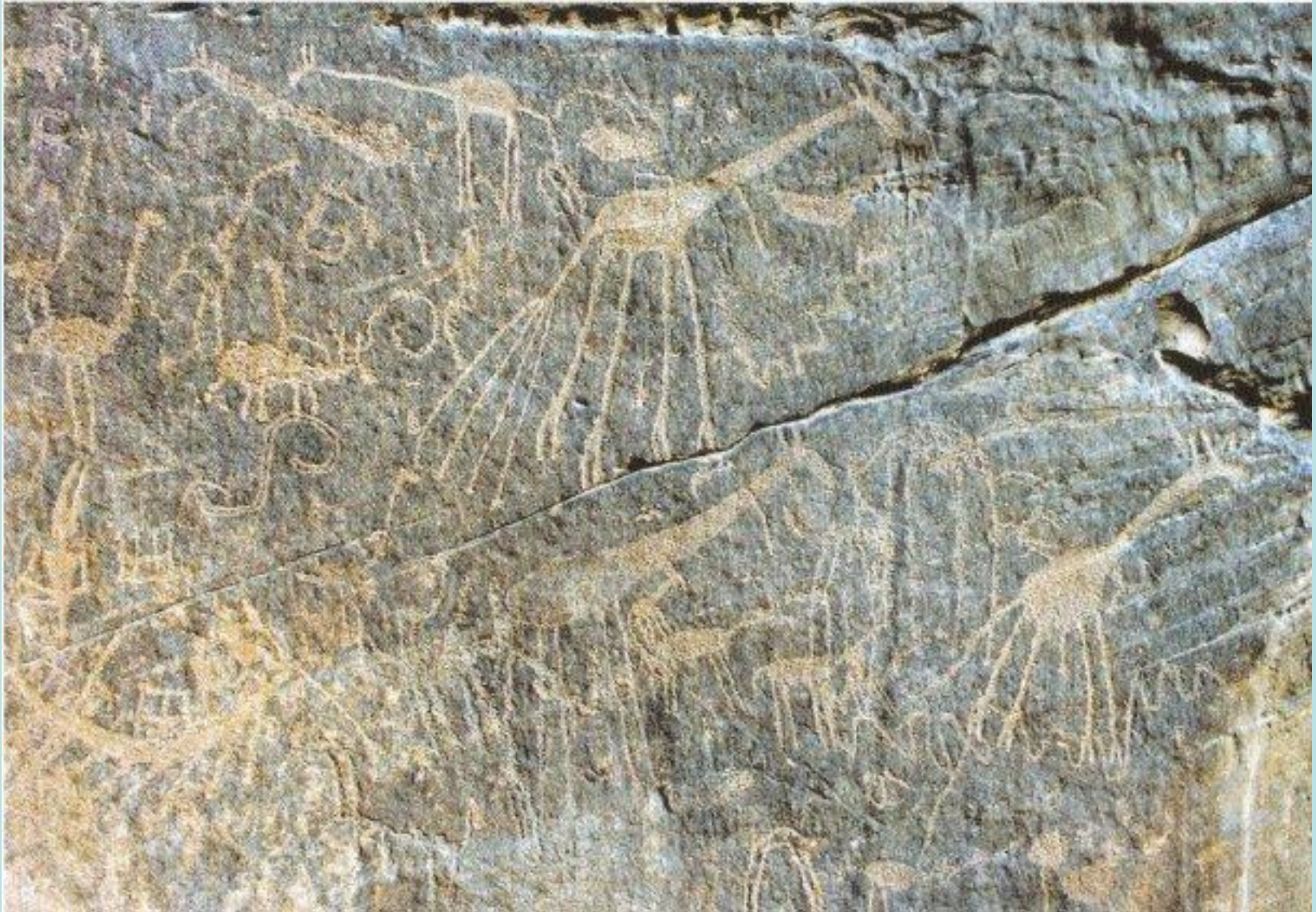
**147 figures closely engaged in hunting**



**Omo valley-not every figure with a feather may be early**

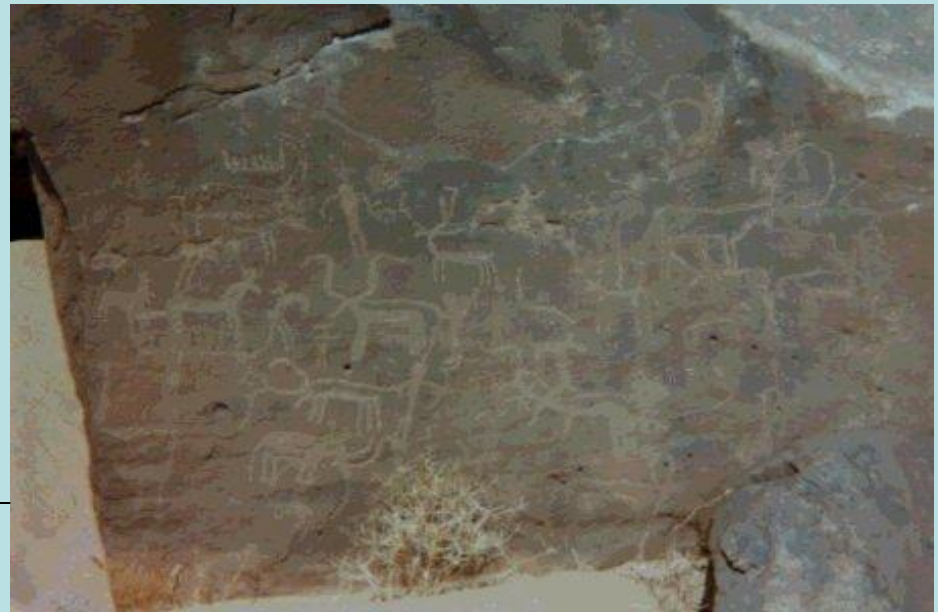
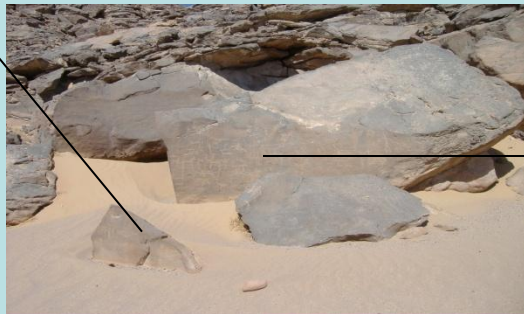


# More 'Attractors': SAL-14





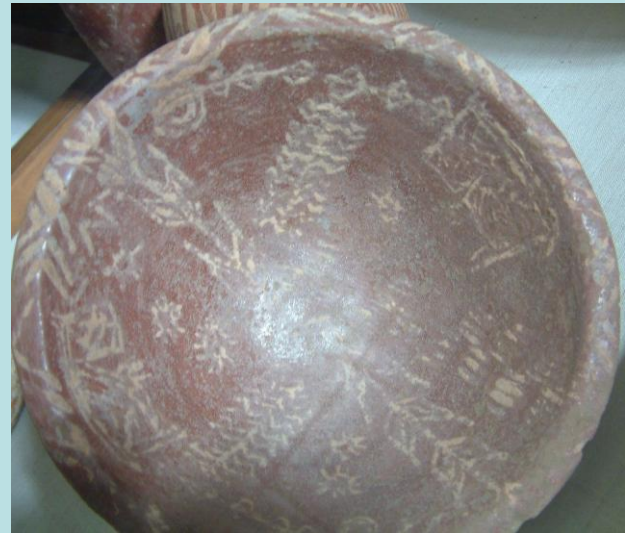
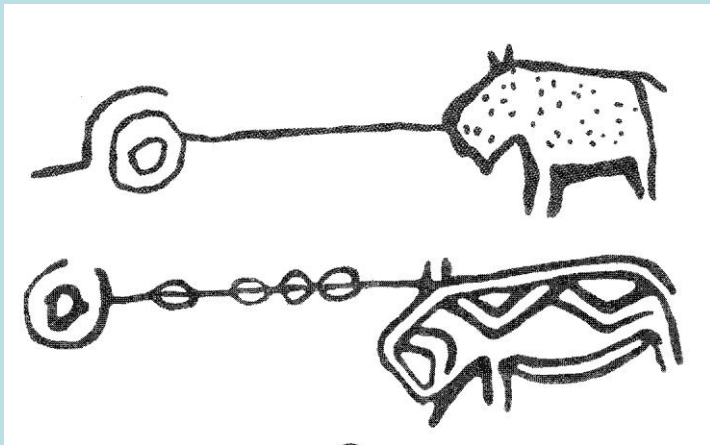
# **‘Tableau’: Wadi Abu Wasil-Winkler’s Site 26**



**Boats and Cattle on rocks to right of main face**

# Dating

- Climate-worsened in 4<sup>th</sup> millennium so large fauna died out (or hunted out)  
BUT-hippos, crocodiles and giraffes in Pharaonic NV art & hunting/mining/  
trips made into desert + Ptolomeic war elephants (but none show manhouts)
- Dateable objects  
BUT-Historical Health Warning-the hippo rock art example is unique



- Scientific dating not feasible; use of patination limited
- Ibex, ostrich living into modern times

# **Historical Health Warning**

**“...we must be suspicious of such overt Egyptological references and be careful not to force the well-structured elements of the Pharaonic repertoire on to a cultural scenario which was still in its early stages.”**

**(Midant-Reynes: 1992)**



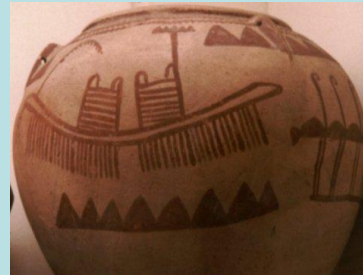
# Dating Boats to NV Design



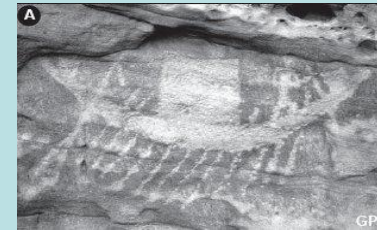
**Naqada II: 9**



**Naqada III: 3**



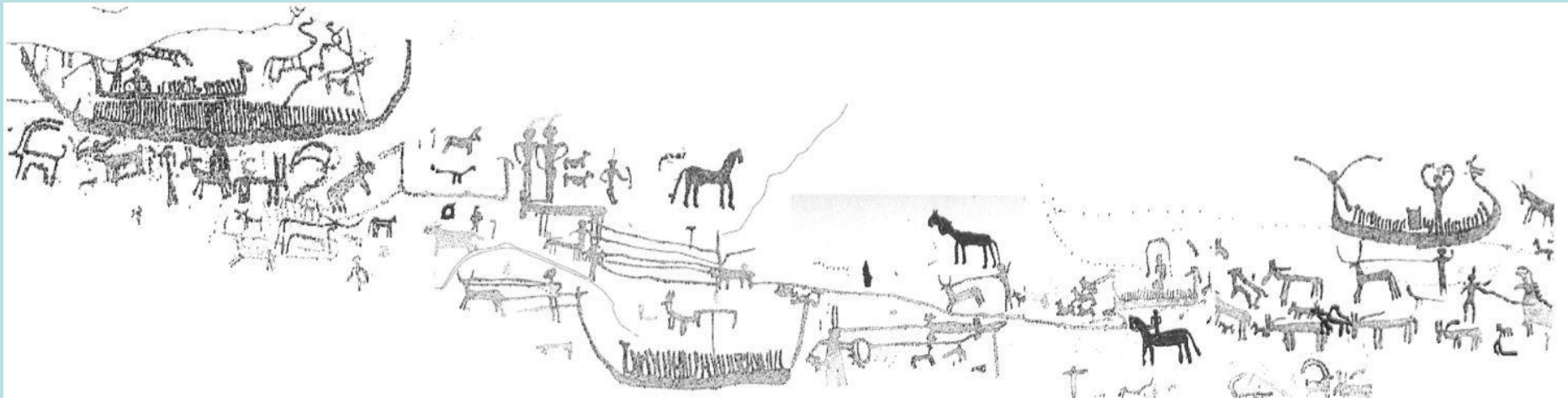
**37 'frond vessels'**



**Pharaonic: 41**

- only 90 dateable by this method
- + by association approx. 260 (33%) in total of boat motifs are predynastic
- 301/710 dateable

# Context



Fuchs 1989

# Boat Characteristics



RME-26



MUA-7

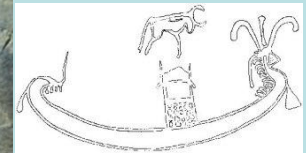
- 49 % are hulls & wide variety of designs
- boats with cabins: 126
- boats with steering oar: 38
- boats with mast/sail: 32
- boats with oars: 38 (only 10 with oars & cabin)
- boats with (stick figure) crew: 199
- boats with one or more central figures on board: 212
- (From total: 710 boats)

**CONCLUSION:** composing a general typology is impossible

-only description possible



# Other Boat Evidence



**Hierakonpolis HK61 (Nekhen News)**

# 'Arms Raised' Figure Examples



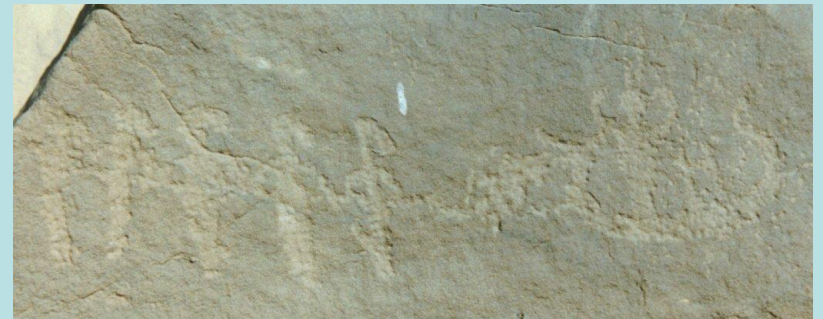
**Wadi Umm Salam**



**Wadi Baramiya**



**Wadi Baramiya**

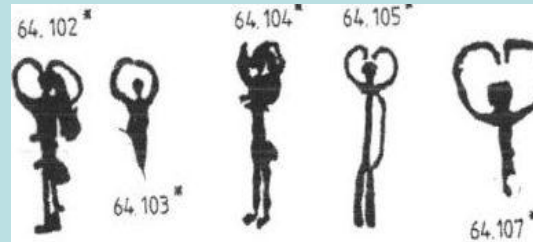
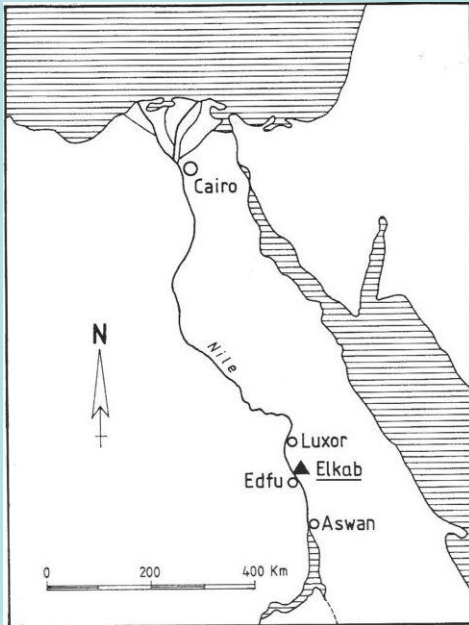


**Wadi Abu Wasil**



**Wadi Midriq** (photo courtesy of AWT)

# 'Arms Raised' Figure Evidence-El Kab



5 examples



Rock of the Vultures

De rotstekeningen van El Kab (Boven-Egypte):  
registratie, seriatie, en interpretatie. D. Huyge  
(unpublished PhD thesis, Leuven, 1995)

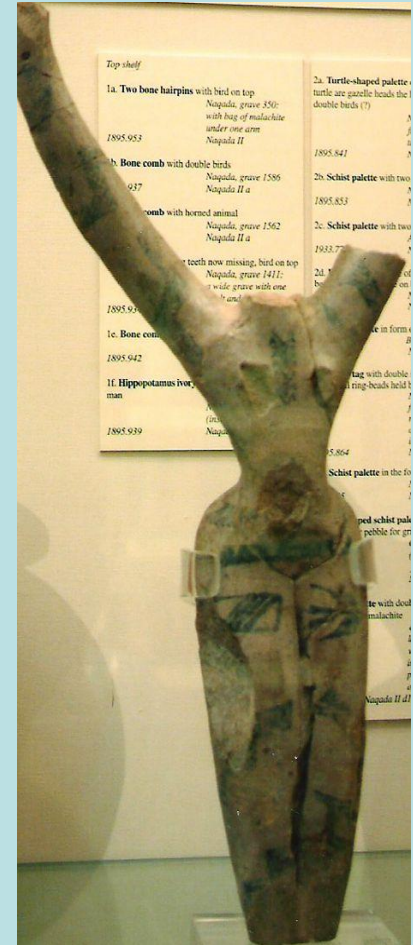


# Figurine Evidence

- from Badarian era onwards
- many unprovenanced
- many purchased



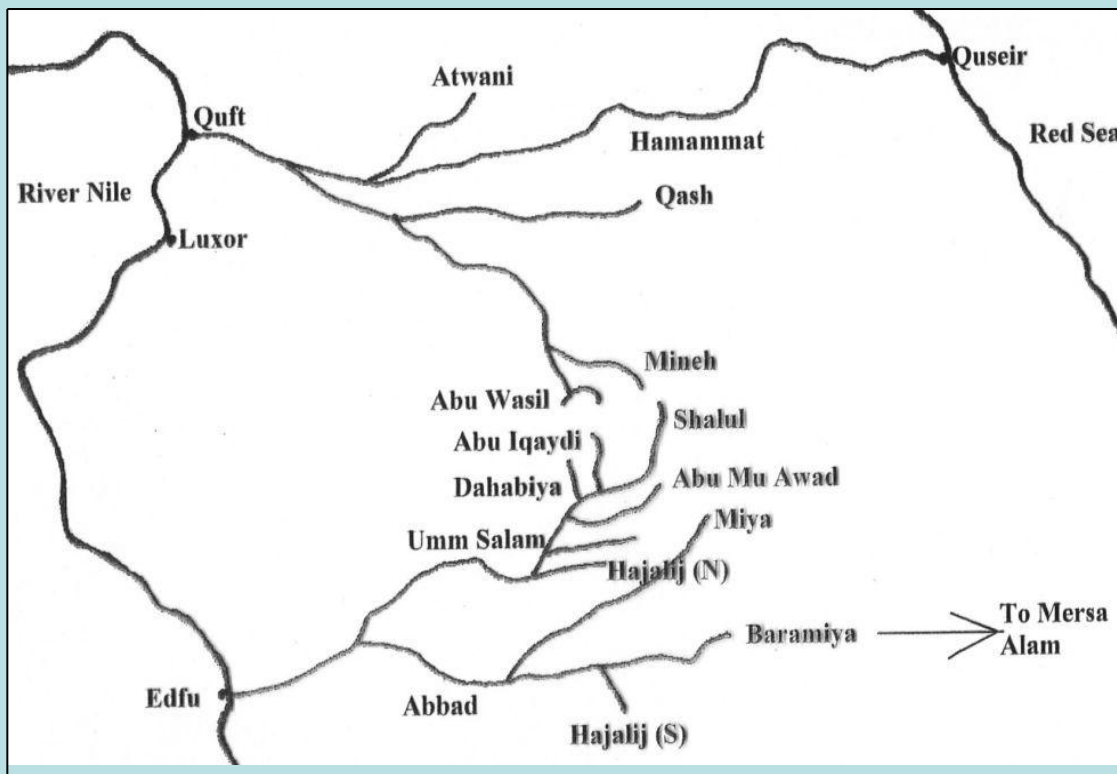
16 ARFs?



P. Ucko 1968 Anthropomorphic Figurines of Predynastic Egypt & Neolithic Crete

# Rock Art: ED Figures

HAJ S	ABB	BAR	HAJ N	SAL	MUA	MIY	IQA	SHA	DAH	WAS	MIN	QAS	HAM	ATW
3	11	7*	0	10	1	2	1	0	0	2	3	9	4	3
5%	19.5 %	12.5 %	0%	18%	2%	3.5%	2%	0%	0%	3.5%	5%	16%	7%	5%



**North 16 29% (14%)**

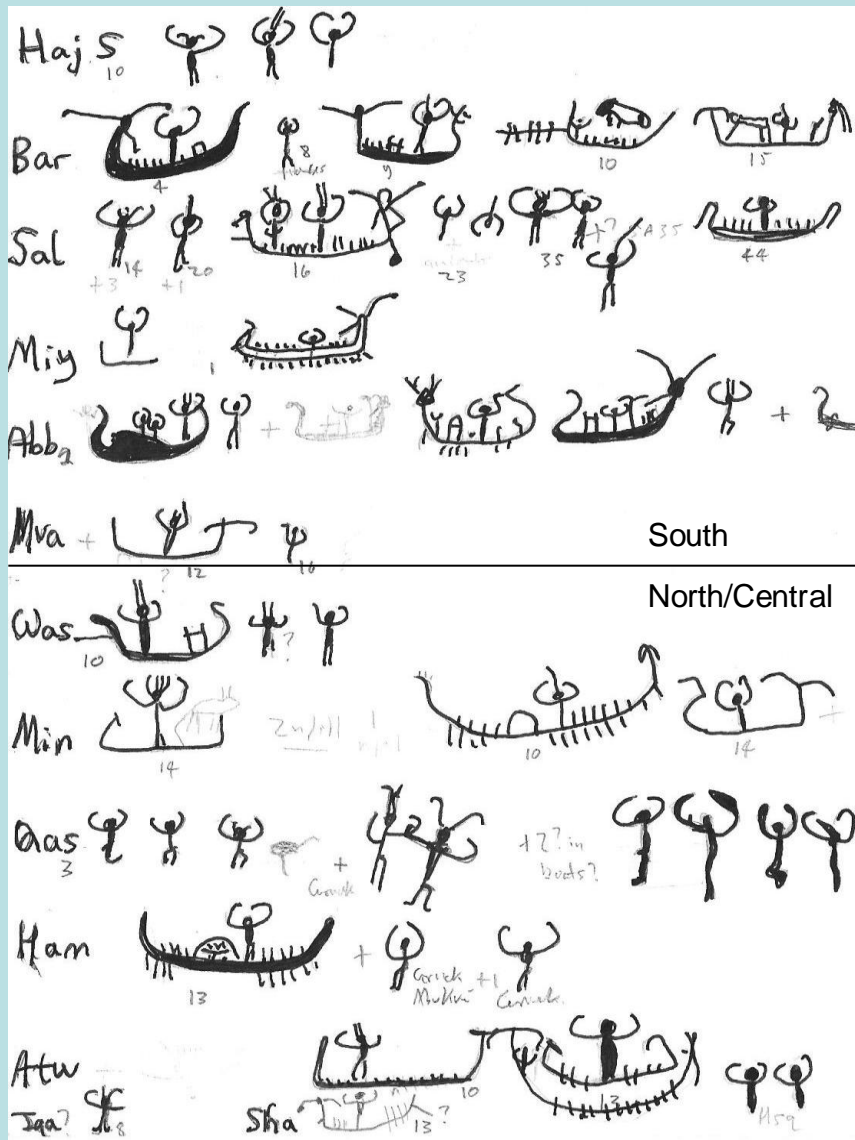
**Central 6 11% (38%)**

**South 34 61% (48%)**

**Total            % all  
56            sites  
(60)**

**\* Plus 4 (2 from Van Craeynest 2004 & 2 located in Feb. 2008)**

# 'Arms Raised' Figures in Boats



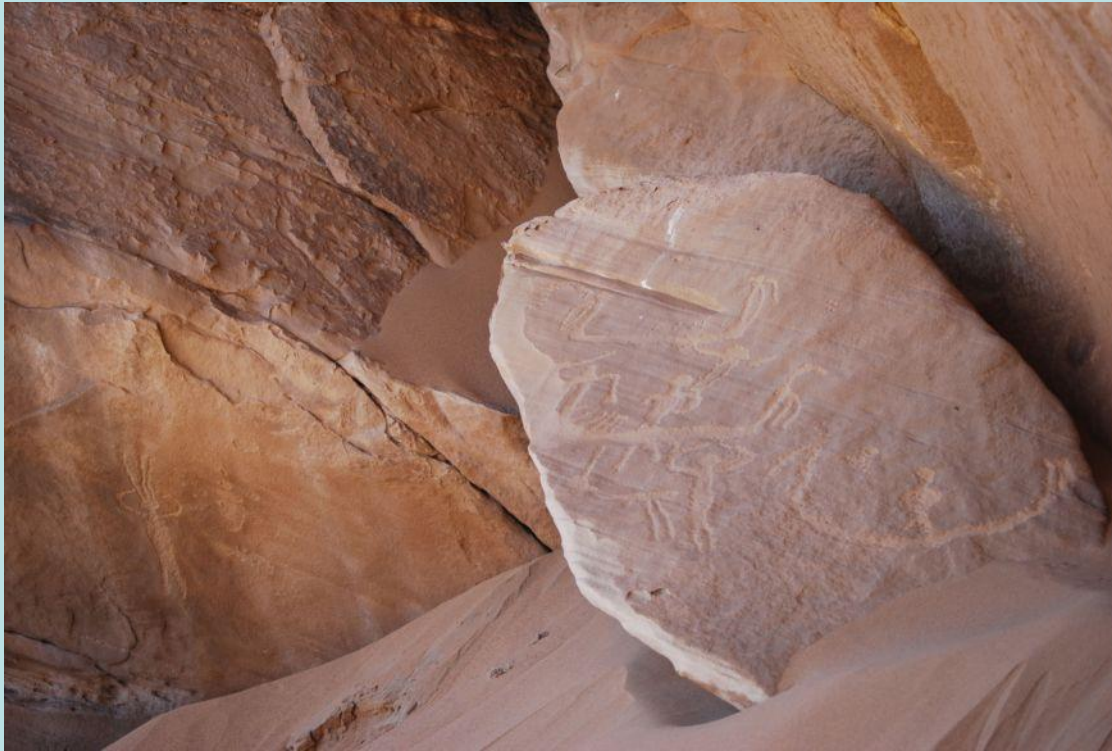
- **22** (/56) stand in boats-**39%**  
at **16** (/27) sites-**59%**
- ARFs in southern wadis strongly associated with 'three frond' boat type
- None associated with boat type akin to that on D Ware



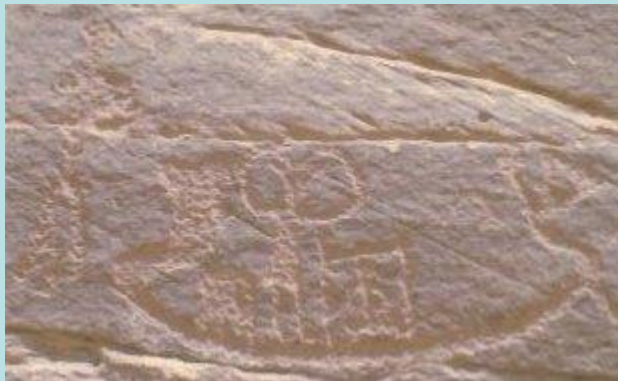
# New Find

above BAR-4





**Above BAR-4 (February 2008)**



**Van Craeynest (2004)**

# The 'Golf Club' Boat



Weigall 1909





# D Ware

Unprovenanced	Provenanced
<b>15</b> female figures	<b>16</b> figures (15 female/1 male)
<b>9</b> vessels	<b>Vessels' (10) Distribution</b> Naqada: 2      Semainah: 1 El Amrah: 2    Harageh: 1 Abydos: 3      Adaima:1
All but two with boat(s)	All with boat(s)

**Total: 19 vessels/31 figures (Graff 2002)**

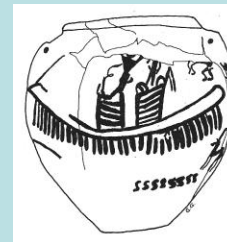
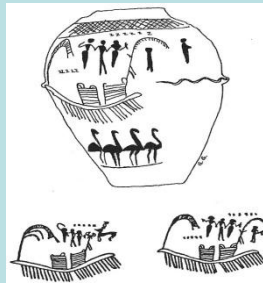
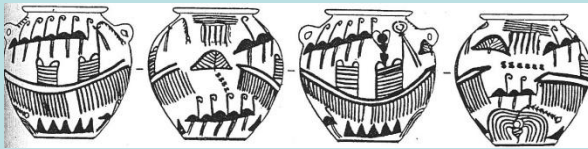
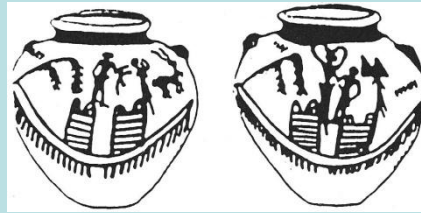
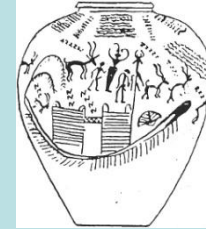
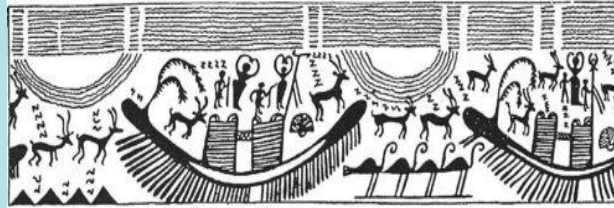
**+ 2 female & 3 male figures found since**

**► Total 36 figures on 469 D Ware**

**(244 D Ware with boat motifs)**

# D Ware

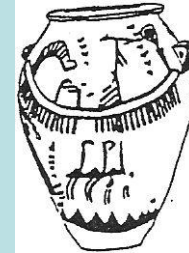
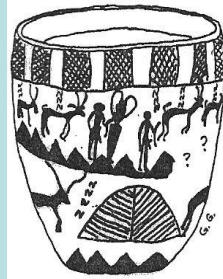
## Provenanced Examples



- Theme of male figure 'presenting' stick to female ARF/ addax or 'supporting' her not found in the ED rock art

# D Ware

## Unprovenanced Examples



- Two examples without boat(s) present
- Example with five in a row is unique



# **‘Arms Raised’ Figures**

- **16+** figurines
- **4** Gebelein linen
- **4** C Ware
- **36** D Ware
- **65+** rock art

**Total:125 (+)**

- **few ARF figurines & figurines rare in graves**
- **Gebelein linen suggests ARFs part of complex ‘dance’**
- **feature of D Ware on 4% of vessels**
- **found at 18.5% of ED rock art sites which may have predynastic elements (in turn 30% of rock-art sites)**
- **associated in the rock art with hunting & boats**
- **associated on pottery with addax, ibex, ostrich & boats**

# Interpretation (I)



- **'Bird Dance'**

based on the figurines' face

[connection to the rock art/wider Naqada culture?]



- **'Cow Dance' analogy**

(Anchole people)

\* cattle association in rock art not clear

# Interpretation (II)

- **Orant figure-praying for luck in hunting or mourning gesture (Winkler 1938)**
- **Symbolic/magical-cause rain or sun (Ucko 1968)**
- **Dance in honour of the deceased (Turin museum)**
- **Fertility dance (associated with the Great Goddess) & precursor of 'Ka' sign (Červíček 1993)**
- **Part of 'Renewal of Life' theme-tomb as a container for this purpose (Graff 2002) -precursor of pharaonic burial practices**
- **Sun-bearing posture associated with regeneration of the deceased through the diurnal rise of the sun-"the cardinal tenet of AE thought" (Huyge 2002)**



# Later Rock-Art



**300+ 'later' figures**

**-especially fighting**

**-common in central wadis**



# Conclusions

- Cattle-herding small scale (if it exists) in EDS/RATS survey area
- Cattle herding feature south of Wadi Baramiya
- Few riverine & large mammals represented
- Boats a significant feature
- Boat typology is problematic-leads to concentration on description
- Boat dating by comparison to Nile Valley motifs & association in context with rock-art motifs
- 'Arms Raised' Figure is a significant motif- associated with boats and hunting + parallels (but not exact) on D-ware
- Hunting is an extremely common feature over a long time period
- Many figures are hunting or stand in boats
- Later rock art features horse & camel riders fighting-conflict absent from earlier rock art