

The Signs of Which Times? Chronological and Palaeoenvironmental Issues in the Rock Art of Northern Africa

The rock art of Northern Africa, which includes both simple engravings and sophisticated paintings, belongs to the worldwide cultural heritage and forms an irreplaceable archaeological and ethnographical documentation about the ancient civilizations of the Sahara. Decades of research on the subject have led to hundreds of publications, but the antiquity of this art is still a matter of dispute. Although North-African rock art most probably reached its peak in the Neolithic Period (5th and 4th millennium BC mainly), drawings are also known which are much earlier (Late Palaeolithic) and more recent (Muslim era) on the time scale. The aim of this colloquium is to give an overview of the current problems in this respect and to present a synthesis of scientific progress regarding dating issues. Therefore, the emphasis, as far as the presentations are concerned, should be put on dating methodology, in particular chronometric dating, and on the relevance of palaeoclimatology for the study of rock art (and vice versa).

Dirk Huyge & Francis Van Noten