

NORWAY

Rock Art of Alta¹

Brief description

This group of petroglyphs in the Alta Fjord, near the Arctic Circle, bears the traces of a settlement dating from c. 4000 to 0 B.C. The thousands of paintings and engravings add to our understanding of the environment and human activities on the fringes of the Far North in prehistoric times.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription

1985

Agency responsible for site management

- Alta Museum
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9500 Alta
e-mail: Hans.Christian.Soborg@alta.kommune.no
website : www.alta.museum.no
- The County of Finnmark
Henry Karlsens plass 1
9800 Vadsø
e-mail: reidun.laura.andreassen@ffk.no

2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria

C (iii)

Justification provided by the State Party

The carvings represent a unique artistic achievement. There are a large number of figures and constellation of figures (in scenes) which are unique, - such as the reindeer corral, the bear hunts and persons on snowshoes and dancing scenes.

To the layman (i.e. the non-archaeologist) the most immediate fascinating thing is the very high artistic quality of the carvings. The prehistoric artist has managed with subtle means, like just shifting the emphasis on the line, to characterize the different animals so precisely that we today are left in no doubt as to what the contemporary fauna was like.

The location of the carvings in cultural groups at different Post Glacial sea-levels within a small geographic area, has created a unique chronological situation, both nationally and

internationally. As such, the carvings provide a key to the chronology of carvings in the rest of Scandinavia and then especially the northern part.

Adjacent to the carvings in Hjemmeluft, Amtmannsnes and Kåfjord, there are large settlement sites which cover the same timespan as the carvings. This, together with the rest of the archaeological data from the Altafjord area give an extreme rare and good possibility to reconstruct the symbolism in the carvings in relation to prehistoric settlements, materials and people through time.

In essence, the carvings in Alta are of an outstanding universal value, both as a document of the evolution of symbolism through 4000 years in the northern hemisphere and as a scientific object to study trends within the development of art and symbolism, all within the framework of human societies.

The four areas include the largest number of carvings in northern Europe. The carvings within the Hjemmeluft/Jiebmaluokta area alone is one of, if not the largest.

The preservation of the carvings are exceptionally good, and those covered by peat (30%) seem to have no wear at all. As such, the production technique can easily be studied and are as such completely unchanged (authentic).

The paintings at Transfarelvdalen are a part of the artistic, symbolic and technological variations connected with the prehistoric societies in Alta. They are an integral part of the same complex cultural system as the rock carvings and therefore important for understanding the development of art, symbolism and religion. As such, the paintings and the rock carvings are inseparable.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

ICOMOS recommends the inclusion of the Alta Petroglyphs on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria III after having observed that they now constitute the most important piece of evidence in favour of the existence of human activity in the confines of the Great North during the prehistoric period.

ICOMOS expresses its agreement with the division into five representative zones selected for the inclusion of the Alta fjord on the World Heritage List and in the policy of conservation implemented by the Norwegian Central Office of Historic Monuments².

¹ Name change adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 30th session.

² Since 1990: the Directorate for Cultural Heritage.

Committee Decision

The Committee made no statement.

- Statement of Significance by ICOMOS adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site
- State Party has not stated if the ICOMOS text is considered to be the official statement of significance
- UNESCO official description of site should be improved. State Party has provided suggestion

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone: a buffer zone has been defined

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained
- No foreseen changes

3. Protection**Legislative and Administrative Arrangements**

- The Cultural Heritage Act §4; special protection was declared by the national government on 23 December 1991 for one of the sites (Hjemmeluft)

Actions proposed:

- Area protection through Cultural Heritage Act § 20 for Amtmannsnes and Kåfjord
- Timeframe: 2005
- Action to be taken at national and regional level

4. Management**Use of site/property**

- Visitor attraction (entrance fee), rural landscape, recreation area, private garden

Management/Administrative Body

- Steering group: discuss major tasks for the management of the site. Mutual information between bodies involved, coordination of initiatives and interests
- Formally constituted
- Management by the State Party; management under protective legislation
- Site manager with responsibilities added to an existing job
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national, regional, local
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

5. Management Plan

- Management plan is being implemented
- Implementation commenced: January 2003
- Adequate
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Finnmark fylkeskommune (the Regional Authority)

6. Financial Resources**Financial situation**

- State budget, regional, local
- Extra funding has been drawn from World Heritage status
- Resources from the Annual Norwegian State Budget: funds are allocated annually for taking care of Norwegian World Heritage sites
- Funding available for the adequate management of the site: sufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 1,5 full-time

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Good: promotion, interpretation, education, visitor management
- Average: conservation, management

8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- There is a laboratory, but no technical conservationist. The Museum has to apply to Tromsø Museum, NIKU or to the Directorate for Cultural Heritage when expertise is needed. This is also the case in other fields, as for example management techniques.

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 68,320 in 2004 - tendency increasing
- Visitor facilities: Museum building with extensive parking lot, exhibitions, shop, café, information desk, toilets. Wooden pathway system through the public area (3 km long), guided tours supplied to rock carvings in 10 languages, guide booklets to the UNESCO area in 7 languages (10 during summer 2005). An extensive school programme and educational activities are offered to children and young people from the local community, the region and from abroad

- No tourism/visitor management plan

10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment, monitoring exercises, condition surveys, archaeological surveys, visitor management, transportation studies
- The conservation and preservation studies and the archaeological surveys and documentation are important in the maintenance of the sites and are the basis for the management plan and the continual revision of this plan, and also the basis for the work plans being developed for all the panels and localities which are inscribed. The visitor studies and tourist traffic studies are useful tools in the quality assurance of the presentation schemes of the Alta Museum for the rock art

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities, businesses; local authorities
- On 'Heritage Day' in September lectures or other rock art activities have been offered to the general public
- No official web site available
- Local participation

Education, information and awareness building activities

- An exhibition on UNESCO World Heritage rock art sites worldwide
- An annual 'Stone Age Week' for primary school children offers a whole day programme for each class (rock art tours, a new rock art play produced by secondary school children is presented, Stone Age food is served and the children make Stone Age tools etc.)
- In 'Environmental Week' in June a programme for school children is offered

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Committee sessions: 28th (2004)

Conservation interventions

- The local species of rock is of good quality, therefore no restoration interventions have

been done. Excavations have been done to a small extent. Several types of documentations have been done by Tromsø University Museum

- Present state of conservation: adequate

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressure, visitor/tourism pressure, criminal damage like tagging and motocross
- Specific issues if mentioned: natural processes, like growth of vegetation and lichen, and weathering (thermal) erosion. Development pressure, population growth

Actions taken

- Legal actions through the Plan and Building Act to keep the buffer zone as a recreation area
- Parts of the sites are/will be covered with turf to prevent erosion etc.

13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme
- Measures taken/planned: climatic data are continuously being gathered from the air and from rock surface (and submitted to a central laboratory in Bergen.) Surveys on paint and other factors are ongoing. Guards have surveillance of the Hjemmeluft site all year round, with intensified efforts during summer. The 4 other areas are frequently patrolled, more regularly during the summer

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: social, management
- Strength: The Museum has been established (1991) at Hjemmeluft. A management plan has been made. A site committee has been established. A monitoring system has been set up. A systematically recorded baseline of documentation is being developed. Steps have been taken to better the protection of the Amtmannsnes site. In general the WH-status has contributed to an overall pride and interest in cultural heritage among local people, both their own heritage, regional heritage and even foreign
- Weaknesses of management: research on interpretation of the rock art is done mainly by scientists who come from the university institutes other places in Norway, not by regional/local institutions. The documentation of the sites is incomplete due in part to preservation considerations (unturfing more rock surfaces will expose more rock art to potential detrimental factors (visitor and

environmental damage). But not having a 'complete' picture is sometimes a handicap for the management. The annual level of financial resources receivable is hardly predictable, which makes it difficult to make long-term plans

Future actions:

- Establish a centre for the rock art and the World Heritage
- Activity does not require funding from World Heritage Fund