


Editorial

Here is a tale of two national parks, of their archaeology, of the public success of that archaeology, and of the difficulties which success may bring.

 The Parc National du Mercantour, created by the French government in 1979, runs along the high ridge of the Maritime Alps, from the region of Tende on the Italian border westwards to near Barcelonnette. Neighbouring it on its northern border is the Italian national park of the Argentera which protects the other side of the watershed. The Maritime Alps, with their southern exposure and some unusual acid rocks, have a remarkable and very rich flora. Another purpose of the Parc's making was to protect a major Alpine area which has not much been developed for skiing; a third was to protect the catchments of the water supply to the French Riviera. Lying between Nice and the Côte d'Azur to the south, and the Turin conurbation to the north, the Argentera–Mercantour offers itself as a mountain playground, not least for the fashion of exploring the hills in 4WD *tout-terrains*.

Archaeologically, much of the Mercantour is rather quiet, with a scatter of epi-Palaeolithic, Alpine Bronze Age and Iron-Age/Gallo-Roman sites on the usual Alpine pattern. More substantial, and casually visible, are the many thousands of rock-engravings in a few valleys surrounding the one peak of Mont Bégo at the eastern end of the park. That whole archaeological zone is now called 'La Vallée des Merveilles', an old name in its Italian form, 'La Vallone delle Meraviglie', which strictly applies just to one little defile, cutting deep just by the summit of Mont Bégo, which is full of the rock-cut figures.

The Vallée des Merveilles is one of the tourist success stories of the decade in the region. It has a marvellous and alluring name, spectacular scenery, whistling marmots to hear, eagles and ibex to spot (chamois too if you are lucky) – and the bonus of the *gravures rupestres*. And the valley is well placed, at 2½ hours' driving time from the coast, and then 2½ hours' walking from the foot of the mountain, outside the park

frontier, where you have to leave the car: sufficiently remote to make an adventure, sufficiently near to be manageable in a weekend, sufficiently provided with mountain refuges that you can buy (and send) postcards, enjoy a *café au lait* and a hot meal, and – if you must tumble and crack a leg – be safely whisked away to hospital in a helicopter. For the *haute montagne* and its people, tourism is the essential industry now, as other means fade away. One of the Bégo shepherds has just retired, leaving just two now to practise the old transhumant rhythm of summer high on Bégo, spring and autumn in the middle valley, winter in shelter below.

The Vallée des Merveilles is not yet St Tropez (though people will try to stroll up in bikinis and beach shoes), but it is written up in the English Sunday papers and mentioned on the back of the city map handed out to all-comers by the Nice *office du tourisme*. The Bégo paths are only clear of snow and easily passable in high summer and early autumn; in these few months the annual number of tourists is now reaching towards 40,000. Not many, by the standards of the Côte d'Azur, but Bégo has all the fragility of a high mountain environment where paths, once eroded, take decades to re-make a grass cover; and – in any case – the attraction is, in theory, the wild solitude of the mountain.

Even less able to withstand this pressure, it is being found, are the rock-engravings. These *gravures* are on rocks, schists for the most part, that are actually rather soft physically; they have survived 3000 and more years because the patina on the rocks and on the figures is chemically very resistant to erosion, and because the mountains have been an empty land. But it is the work of not many minutes to scratch a name with a knife, to rub over an old figure with a stone so it stands out white for a photograph, or to make a pastiche figure copying an ancient shape. The surfaces in the Vallée des Merveilles carry enough evidence from all periods to make one half-believe that the making of graffiti is a human universal: as well as prehistoric carved figures and a handful of paintings, there are a Roman inscription (whose

record of homosexual incest resists unambiguous translation), any number of early medieval scratched figures, several crosses, a quantity of Renaissance and early modern ships, the names of 19th-century notables that run from a celebrated brigand to a celebrated archaeologist, shepherds' names and profiles from Edwardian times, and – behind the mountain and 2800 m above sea-level – contemporary Irish terrorist slogans of our own decade. Even the archaeologists have not resisted the imperative to scratch. A rock marked 'CB' derives from the pioneering fieldworker Clarence Bicknell. Carlo Conti, who worked there in the 1930s, marked each rock with a carved 'C' as he recorded it. And current fieldworkers scratch on a reference number, not always very neatly, when they register a surface's figures – on an un-abused surface this intrusion is the first interference on the natural rock for a thousand or more years. But most of the new marks on the Bégo rocks are nasty scrawled names and slogans, like those on any subway wall, that run near or over ancient figures.

The result has been real trouble. Since figures re-patinate very slowly, the few score scrawls made each year by a few score individuals are now adding up to a hideous mess. The gravures of the Vallée des Merveilles especially are being visibly degraded year by year, and are in distinctly worse condition than they were ten years ago. This past October it was planned to remove one celebrated figure, the anthropomorph called 'Le Chef des Tribus', from the valley for its own safety. The chief is to be winched out by helicopter and will soon be installed in the new 'Musée des Merveilles' that will be built in the town of Tende down below the mountain. But he is the only major figure that is carved on a loose, thin slab which weighs only a few hundred kilos. Everything else, on big, helicopter-proof slabs or on the solid bedrock, will have to be protected, or will perish, in its proper place in the landscape. If constant surveillance is impossible, as it may be in an extended wild valley; and if a system of walkways as has been built for the Alta petroglyphs (ANTIQUITY 62 (September 1988): 541–6) is impracticable, as it may be for that terrain; then, must the Vallée des Merveilles now be closed for its own survival?

Probably not. It is a fact of tourism that customer interest, once created, cannot be

turned off like a tap. Like it or not, the Merveilles will stay on the tourist map. The Parc has the promotion of public interest as one of its defined purposes, correctly placed behind conservation, in the usual twin aims of national parks, first conservation and then tourism, that one begins to think may be fundamentally opposed. Archaeologists working in the Merveilles have been assiduous in making their work known, in magazine and newspaper articles, on television and film: it is our own publicity which has helped create such a public interest. The marvel of the Merveilles is a mainstay of the local economy.

What can and should be done, then?


Fortunately, the damage is largely localized, at least for now, in the Vallée des Merveilles *proprement dite*. The two other great areas of figures, the Arpette to the west and Val Fontanalbe on the other side of the Bégo summit ridge, are off the tourist routes, devoid of through paths; they have not suffered so far. The first priority must be to keep those regions quiet, and their figures pristine. Closing the Vallée des Merveilles will simply divert the crowds on to those more precious places. So it is the Vallée itself, already so damaged, which will have to take the pressure again, by a deliberate process of *canalisation* that will direct and encourage visitors through it. Its gravures apart, the defile is the main north–south mountain path through the region, part of a national hiking route through France, and the rugged relief offers no alternative path to which visitors can be diverted.

To the park authorities will fall the responsibility of more actively managing the valley; that will mean much expense in creating defined pathways and display panels, and in providing personnel on duty in the valley during the summer. The park will also have the uneasy job of explaining why Bégo can less and less be a free place to explore at will. Risk will remain, since open mountains can never be as secure as museum galleries. And there will be expense of a different kind, as this wild and solitary valley is – like so many sites before it – tamed and transformed by the visible apparatus of tourist management on the ground.

Those of us who study in the region as academics will have to take on new responsibilities of a different kind. We must, for the principle of the matter and because the pres-

ence of modern scratches of any kind attracts others, no longer mark the surfaces in any way, convenient though that habit has been. We will have to be reticent about everywhere except that sacrificial zone of the Vallée itself, or at least not identify just where precious things are otherwise to be found. This will not be comfortable – I for one would like to take the world to see the remarkable things hidden in that most beautiful of landscapes, Val Fontanalbe. Henry de Lumley's new account of the Bégo imagery in terms of two divinities, a masculine god of thunder with a dagger as his emblem, and a feminine goddess of the earth, is best illustrated by a single surface whose figures include the two deities and their attributes; but that unique surface falls in the Arpette, the region about which no public fuss can now be made. We must keep a little quiet about where it is. At most the surface can safely be illustrated, if not much clue is given as to where in the Bégo region it is. It might be safer if we acted as if it were not known to exist at all. With these new duties will have to go a ceding of responsibility, so that we give publicity only to such figures and in such ways that the park managers are able to cope with the consequences.

So it is that the figures of Mont Bégo begin to be placed with those many other treasures about which we do better to say less than we want.

 Half a world away from Mont Bégo is Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory of Australia, again newly placed on the tourist map, now in the movies (this is *Crocodile Dundee* land) and in the European newspapers. With annual tourist numbers not far off doubling each year, how many times may the present Kakadu figure of 250,000 be multiplied? Again the archaeological interest – at least for tourism – is in rock-art, the sandstone galleries whose painted figures may go back in unbroken tradition from this century right into, perhaps, the Pleistocene. Again, the figures are at risk as they weather naturally, and they are especially vulnerable to visitor damage, by being wetted or touched up to make better photographs, or by the scrawling of a name. Again, the local economy depends largely on tourism.

Visitor damage is not a major problem. That the Kakadu figures are at less risk is due in part to other park attractions, especially waterbirds, and in part to two facts of geography – the size of

the place, and the presence and reputation of its crocodiles. Where the areas of the Bégo massif with substantial rock-art total only about 5 sq. km altogether, Kakadu is on the Australian scale, a great slab of land quite a few tens of kilometres in each direction, and the existing park may soon be enlarged. Tourists in Kakadu stick to the highways, of which there are very few; they go to the only two art sites which are signposted and open, at Ubirri and Nourlangie of a total thousand or more (and there are yet more over the border in the adjoining Arnhem Land reserve). One of the Nourlangie painted sites, the Anbangbang shelter, is also a major archaeological site, the only one presented to visitors. It is not that the rest is declared off-limits, though some of the land is. They are simply out there in the bush, and Kakadu bush is a vast and a wild country, strictly for the capable bushwalker. Wander beyond line of sight from the highway and you could tramp for a day or two in wilderness until heat and lack of water did you in. So not many tourists leave the road and brave the tropical heat in the bush, and not many of them would know where to look for painted rocks. The fame of the Kakadu crocodiles is the best accomplice here, the warnings never to swim, those well-founded notices near river bridges that read, 'Large crocodiles frequent this area,' and the stories of Sweetheart, the big fellow who used to crunch his way through the metal of aluminium boats.

There remains a puzzling discrepancy between the many hours which tourists endure, stuffed into jumbo jets as they travel from Europe or America to Kakadu, and the very few minutes they actually spend looking at rock-art or at crocodiles before they scurry back into the air-conditioning and down yet another fizzy chemical drink. That reluctance really to explore for oneself is one of the great mysteries of the phenomenon of tourism; it had best not be enquired into, at least for the future safety of the Kakadu pictures. Meanwhile, the tour buses sweep into the Nourlangie car-park and sweep out again, leaving Kakadu art unscathed.

Crocodiles in the Vallée de Merveilles are out of the question; they would not enjoy the snow, and they might eat the marmots. But if only there was some kind of creature on the French mountain of which tourists would go in serious dread; that would stop them straying from the

paths. There are vipers of two kinds, but vipers run all over southern Europe, so there is no special fear of them. The Parc du Mercantour has been recently re-populated with a breeding colony of ibex in a most successful 'Opération Bouquetin'. The time may come when the park needs to re-discover that its mountains once used to be the haunt of wolves.

Like other European archaeologists visiting Kakadu, I was astonished by the sites and their art, and thought well of their presentation. There were points of detail to quibble over. The car-park at Nourlangie is too close to the site and too intrusive, through not following sufficiently that good rule, 'Make the bleeders walk!' The display panels are not well positioned at Nourlangie, and their texts show weaknesses that follow from their being written by people who do not understand the archaeology properly (ask the excavator to write them!). And though the park does super posters, it has missed the chance of publishing at the middle level, for non-specialists who nevertheless want to learn about the place in some real depth. (Thousands of miles from almost anywhere thought to be anywhere, Kakadu gets an expensive and, for the most part, a classy and enterprising species of tourist.)

Crocodiles and other natural advantages apart, Kakadu shows the benefits of being a 'greenfield' site, where a new park authority could choose what to display and how to display it, to suit conservation needs and tourist demands; and a full archaeological survey and consultancy preceded the making of the park. There may in the end be regret that the tourist accommodation is being provided at Jabiru, within the park, rather than pushed onto or outside the boundary, where it could grow without restraint over the frontier. Otherwise, things look good. Against this, the Mercantour is an area of old tourist exploitation, where the pattern of visiting pre-dates the making of the park, and where – fatally – well-meant publicity for Bégo rock-art and its study has largely been spread independent of the park's planning and management on the ground.

If there are storm clouds over Kakadu's art and archaeology, they seem well out on the horizon. What shape do those storm clouds have? One is clearly the estrangement between Aboriginals and archaeologists that has occurred elsewhere in Australia [see pages 690–6 for

more on this], an estrangement which should stay theoretical if local relations remain good. Another is the tension between State and Federal governments in relation to States rights: Kakadu is run by the Australian Federal parks authority, and some political interests would transfer it to the Northern Territory's control, though the Territory's park authority does not really have the expertise that Kakadu demands.

The larger cloud, from which lightning could strike in various directions, is in the diversity of interests whose coalition of support makes the park live: the park managers, the tourist interests, the 'green' movement of conservationists, the archaeologists and anthropologists, and – rightly central – the Aboriginal traditional owners who, on being granted title to the land, leased it to the national parks service.

The Ranger mine operation, an open-cast pit and ore-treatment plant bang in the middle of the park, exemplifies the formal conflicts of interest; it is not just any mine, but a uranium mine, enough to make any respectable greenie light up with outrage. On the face of it, the Ranger mine is limited in its impact, reasonably discreet, and closely watched by independent scientific supervision. The radicals and greenies would kill it, for all that it stands for. Despite the intrusion, the traditional owners of the region welcome it; the royalty that the mine pays is the main income for the Gagadju Association, the collective body for the owners.

A little ripple on the waters currently concerns one occupant of the new Crocodile hotel* in Jabiru. The Gagadju Association, prudently investing its uranium royalties while they last, has built a plush new hotel in the park. Since the crocs are what Kakadu is famous for, the hotel is built in the shape of a giant green crocodile – like a hot-dog stand moulded in the shape of an oversize hot dog – complete with jaws (driveway entrance), eyes, legs (stairways) and jagged tail. In the middle of the hotel, where the crocodile has its tummy, is an open space, with water-pool and paths in shapes vaguely deriving from Aboriginal legend; the idea is to catch a local albino croc, subdue him a bit, and pop him in the pool as centrepiece of the Croc hotel. It might give a new edge to the idea of

* Officially The Four Seasons Hotel, Jabiru, after the name of the hotel chain which is partner in the venture. The Great Crocodile Hotel would have been so much better as a name.

mixed bathing: morning, people; afternoon, croc; lunch-time, mixed (mixed and topless?). Crocs are all over Kakadu now that they have been protected a few years, but albino crocs are not; there is just one in the croc farm in Darwin, and another of known haunts in the wild that could be caught for the hotel. Everything is ready – the trap for the albino croc, a holding tank for him to stay in a while (built by a passing Italian with a little inept help from a passing Brit), the pool in the Great Croc hotel itself. What is lacking is permission from the park authority, whose head declines to sign the consent form because, rumour has it, the greenies and animal liberationists would squeal too loud.

The story of the Great White Croc is a little one, and natural history to boot. But in its tensions one can see issues that may arise in matters that concern human history and prehistory, in particular between the 'traditional' and the 'modernizing'. In some respects, the traditional owners – as their named status indicates – are concerned with the traditional. But those traditions include a tradition of hunting in the park (something park authorities do not always like); and the traditional owners support for uranium mining and are responsible for the building of the (post-)modern Jabiru hotel. Perhaps in Kakadu the most traditionally minded of all are actually those non-Aboriginals who wish that Kakadu and its people were not being swallowed up in the concerns of the later 20th century, who would prefer things to be as they were in the old days, when there were neither mines nor tourist buses, when politics was not visibly a power in the land, when the former way of life was of sufficient force that the Aboriginal dead were placed on platforms rather than buried in the European manner. As in respect of the Kimberley repainting affair, one sees the presence and influence of committed outsiders who wish the traditional owners were more traditional than they have chosen now to be.

☞ Kernos is a new international and multidisciplinary review of ancient Greek religion, with an editorial committee headed by André Motte of Liège. Its first annual number for 1988 includes papers, proceedings of a 1987 colloquium 'La pluridisciplinarité dans l'étude de la religion grecque antique', notes on excavations and meetings, book reviews and book and

journal listings, in French, English and Greek. Kernos costs 1200 Belgian francs: editorial and subscription enquiries to: André Motte, Place du XX-Août 32, B-4000 Liège, Belgium.

☞ Although the Mediterranean is so distinct a geographical region, and its archaeology so rich, no general archaeological journal for the region has existed until the *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* issued its first number, dated June 1988. Its editor, Bernard Knapp, puts the gap down to the 'Great Tradition', of a Classical archaeology intimately associated with the study of fine arts and ancient history, and a corresponding 'Great Divide' that takes prehistoric archaeology of the same regions away into separate departments, often of anthropology. Among the *JMA*'s aims are 'to control the data and master the scholarship of the Great Tradition, within the methodological framework and theoretical problem-orientation of the Great Divide'.

Issue 1's 140 pages include a detailed statement of editorial policy and three strong papers, all from the later prehistory of the eastern of the two Mediterranean basins: Sturt Manning at length on the chronology of the Thera eruption (a story which looks set to run and run some more); Curtis Runnels & Tjeerd van Andel on trade and the origins of agriculture; David Rupp on the 'Royal Tombs' at Salamis, Cyprus. Issue 2 promises also a new section of discussion and debate, and a broader spread of subjects in space and in time.

The *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* is edited by Dr Bernard Knapp, Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge, Cambridge CB3 9DA, England. Two issues annually cost £45/\$72 institutional, £15/\$25 individual, £11.25/\$18.75 student: *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology*, Sheffield Academic Press, 343 Fulwood Road, Sheffield S10 3BP, England.

☞ Word at last came through in September of the radiocarbon date for the Turin Shroud, the cloth bearing an image of a crucified man revered as the possible shroud of Christ. The combined results of three laboratories' independent determinations place the Shroud's cloth as having been made between 1260 and 1390 AD. I had guessed in *ANTIQUITY* (61 (March 1987): 6–7) a 12th-century date, by the simple pattern of other relics that have been dated by absolute



means. This places the Shroud in, or even towards the end of, the medieval period when relics were most in vogue. It would seem to remove the possibility of the Shroud having anything to do with Christ or his time. It leaves the puzzlement often expressed as to the means by which the image was scorched into the cloth.

☞ The end-of-year silly season, with newspaper quizzes and annual awards for everything, is nearly upon us. Here are ANTIQUITY's annual awards for 1988.

Tactful Title of the Year Award, to W.C. McGrew of the Department of Psychology, University of Stirling, Scotland, for his paper, 'Tools to get food: the subsistants of Tasmanian Aborigines and Tanzanian chimpanzees compared' (*Journal of Anthropological Research* 43 (1987): 247ff.). (The abstract and paper find not much difference: perhaps Mr McGrew is not comparing things in quite the right way.)

Enterprise Award for Initiative in Experimental Ethnoarchaeology, to Dirk H.R. Spenneman of the Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, who reports in an appendix on experimental butchering with bamboo blades to a paper on cannibalism in Fiji: 'The experiment was conducted using bamboo from Fiji sent me by

Fergus Clunie of the Fiji Museum and a pig's foot purchased at the meat market in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, there being no human joints available' (*Domodomo* 5 (1987): 44).

True Humour in Unexpected Places Prize, to Elizabeth Orna, author of the otherwise impeccably austere *Information policies for museums* (Museums Documentation Association 1988), for her Figure 6.5, 'How to ensure disaster in introducing microcomputers'.

Bouquet Offered to the Non-Archaeologist Who Best Knows What We Are Here For, to Fred Goossen, professor of music at the University of Alabama and arts columnist of the *Tuscaloosa News*, who remarked in his column for 25 September 1988, 'The fact that archaeology, despite its science,* is a search into and for the unknown, an effort to lay bare and interpret the past, means that it appeals to our inherent curiosity. For this reason, too, it can lay claim to being that Holy Grail of science, "pure research". Its object is knowledge for its own sake. No human pursuit can be nobler.'

CHRISTOPHER CHIPPINDALE

* The judges report particularly enjoying the phrase 'despite its science'.

There is an error in Julian Henderson's paper in the September 1988 issue, 'Glass production and Bronze Age Europe'. The figure for sodium oxide in the first text line of page 440, immediately below the caption, should read 'c. 6–9%'.

The June editorial suggested that the fully ethical archaeologist should arrange to be buried with fitting grave-goods under a conspicuous earthwork or monument, so as to help keep the trade's specialists in mortuary studies in continuing business. A trowel was nominated as a suitable emblem of our trade.

In this photograph, of unknown origin, the emblem of the trowel and the conspicuous monument are combined on a grand scale. But who is buried at the tip? Is it an archaeologist at all? Will someone please dig and find out?

Notice has come to light of another pioneering professional whose ethical desire to be buried in archaeological manner was frustrated. John Windele, the popular 19th-century Cork antiquarian, expressed a wish to be buried under one of the ogham stones collected in his 'megalithic library'. He chose the stone from Mount Music (Knockouran), Co. Cork. His family were willing, but in the event he was not buried under the Mount Music stone, which in the end went to Queen's College in Cork. This way, Sir Samuel Ferguson tells us, the Mount Music stone is in Cork and the rest of the megalithic library in Dublin. Windele was buried instead in St Joseph's Cemetery, Cork, under a very massive Celtic cross, erected by his many friends; in its own way archaeological enough, one supposes.