



Battle for Dampier

An introduction to the history of the
IFRAO campaign to preserve the
Dampier petroglyphs

Our heritage

The battle for Burrup

On one side is \$6 billion worth of international gas projects, which the government says are vital to our economic future. On the other is the world's biggest ancient rock art collection, which experts and locals fear will be destroyed by development. Robert McGlynn investigates Burrup Peninsula's great divide.



TO SUCCESSIVE state governments, the value of the land on and around the Burrup Peninsula off Dampier has always been measured by what lies beneath.

Last financial year, production from the area's mining and petroleum industries contributed close to \$12 billion to the State's coffers. So it is no surprise that politicians like Pilbara MLA Fred Riebeling declare that development of our natural resources is an obligation of government.

But to the Dampier community, as well as several experts who have criticised what they see as a develop-at-all-costs attitude, any obligation to the economic future should not erase our obligation to the past.

themselves, Mr Bodnarik goes on to say that if the proposed development goes ahead, his calculations indicate a trebling of atmospheric pollution, and the resulting acid rain will considerably hasten the engraving's disappearance.

The government's proposed development for the Burrup includes six new chemical plants, some of which will use natural gas as a base for products used in the plastics and

development, well before the creation of the Aboriginal Heritage Act in the early 1970s.

The region was in the hands of the then Department for State Development. Although its name has changed over the years, its original vision for the Burrup has not.

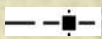
"The same cowboys have been in control all this time," he says.

Rather than re-evaluating the situation, he says, the bureaucrats are continuing in the

Clockwise from top left:

Space Shuttle image of the Dampier Archipelago, W.A.





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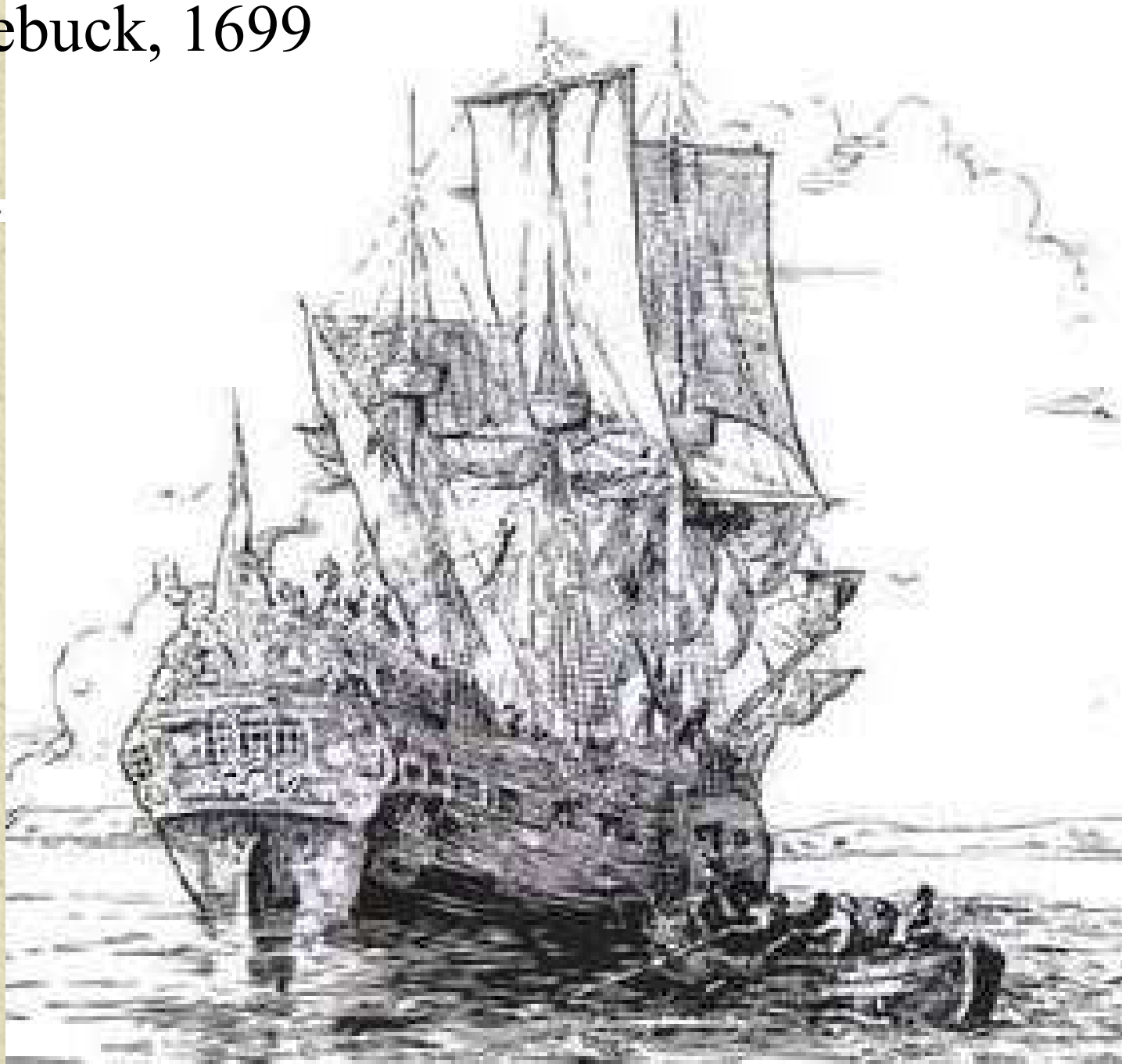
Northern
Murujuga





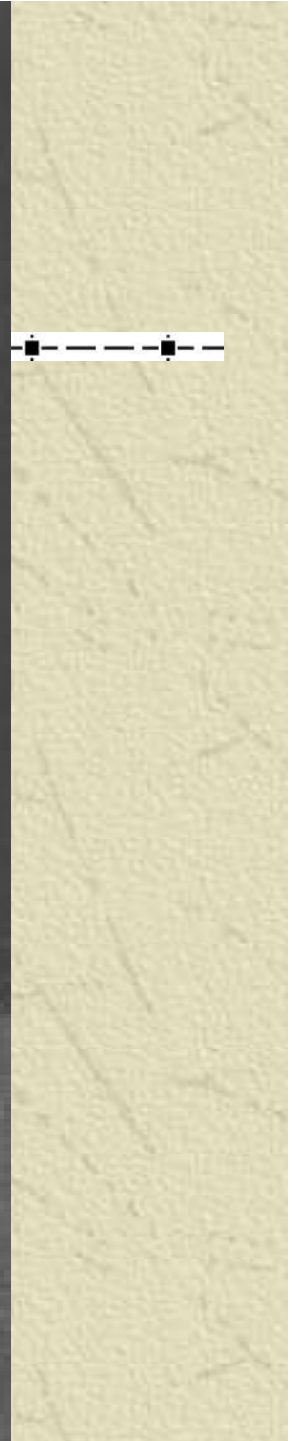
Watering Cove, eastern Murujuga

Roebuck, 1699

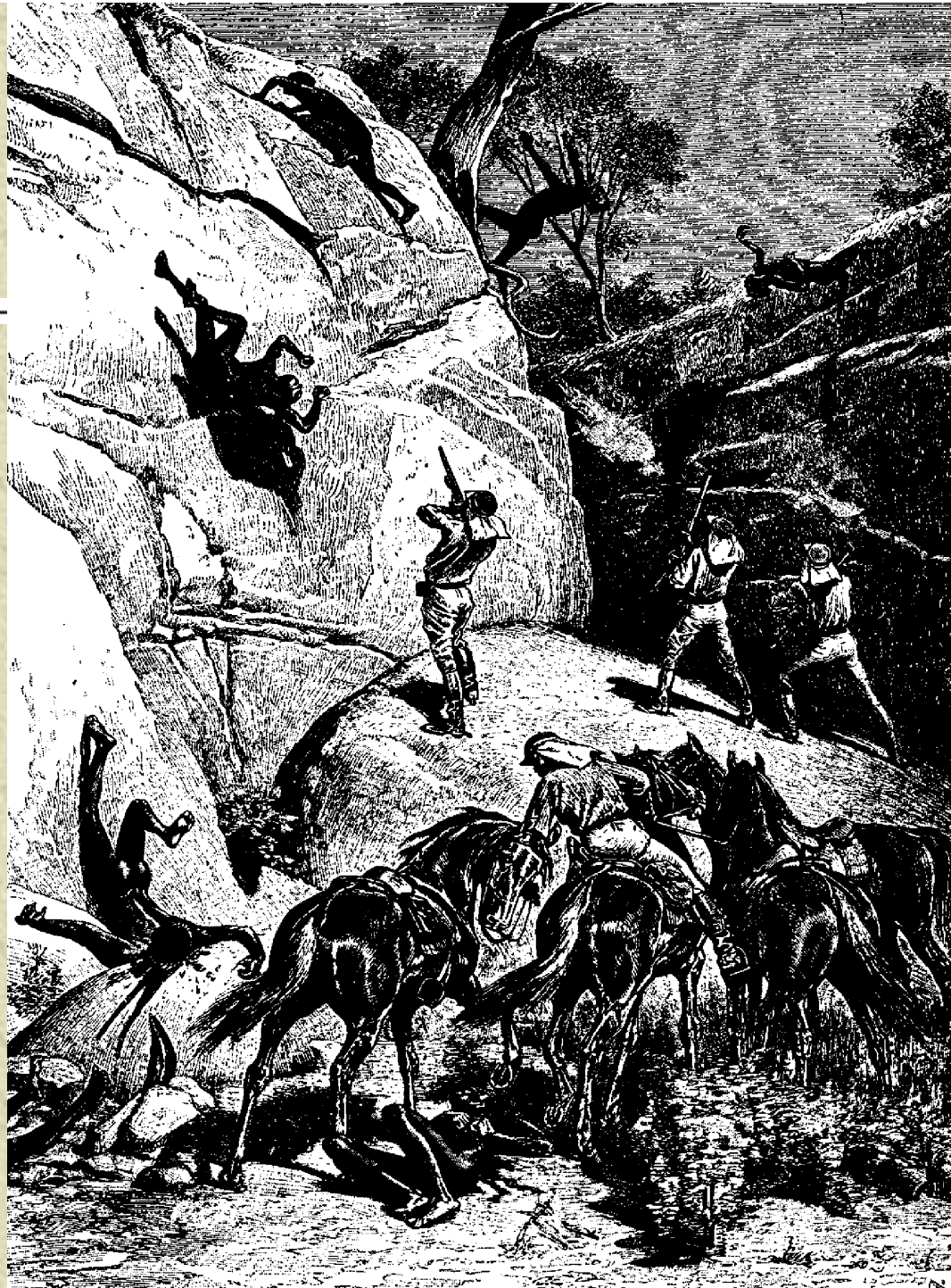




William
Dampier



Massacre









Happy Valley, 18 February 1968

David Daniel
Senior Custodian,
Ngaluma

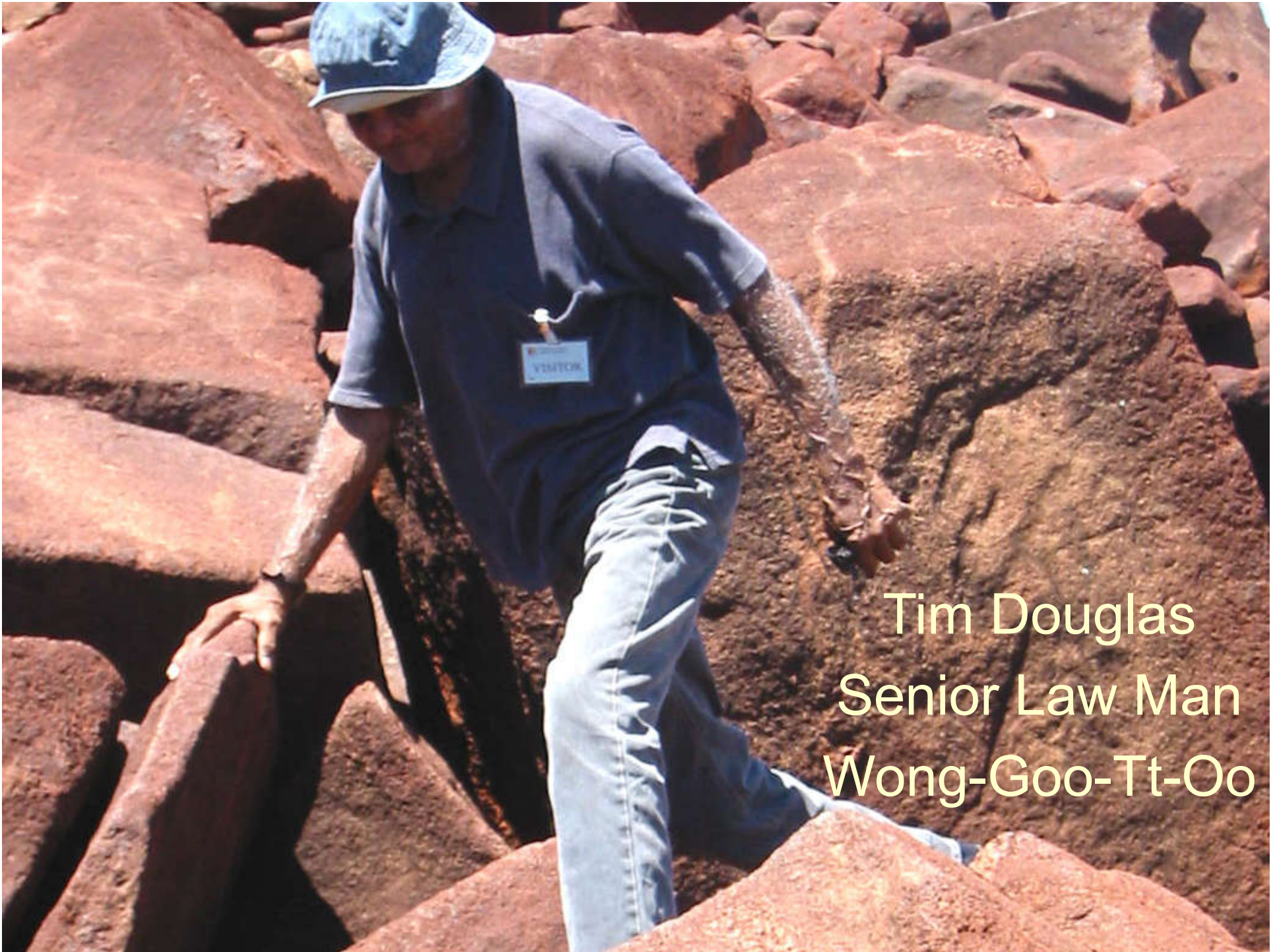




Monty Hale, Senior Custodian, Njamal

A photograph of Wilfred Hicks, an elderly man with glasses, wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt and a wide-brimmed hat. He is standing in front of a large, dense pile of reddish-brown, angular rocks. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Wilfred Hicks
Senior Custodian
of the Wong-goo-tt-oo



Tim Douglas
Senior Law Man
Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo



Withnell Bay petroglyphs, rediscovered 1969



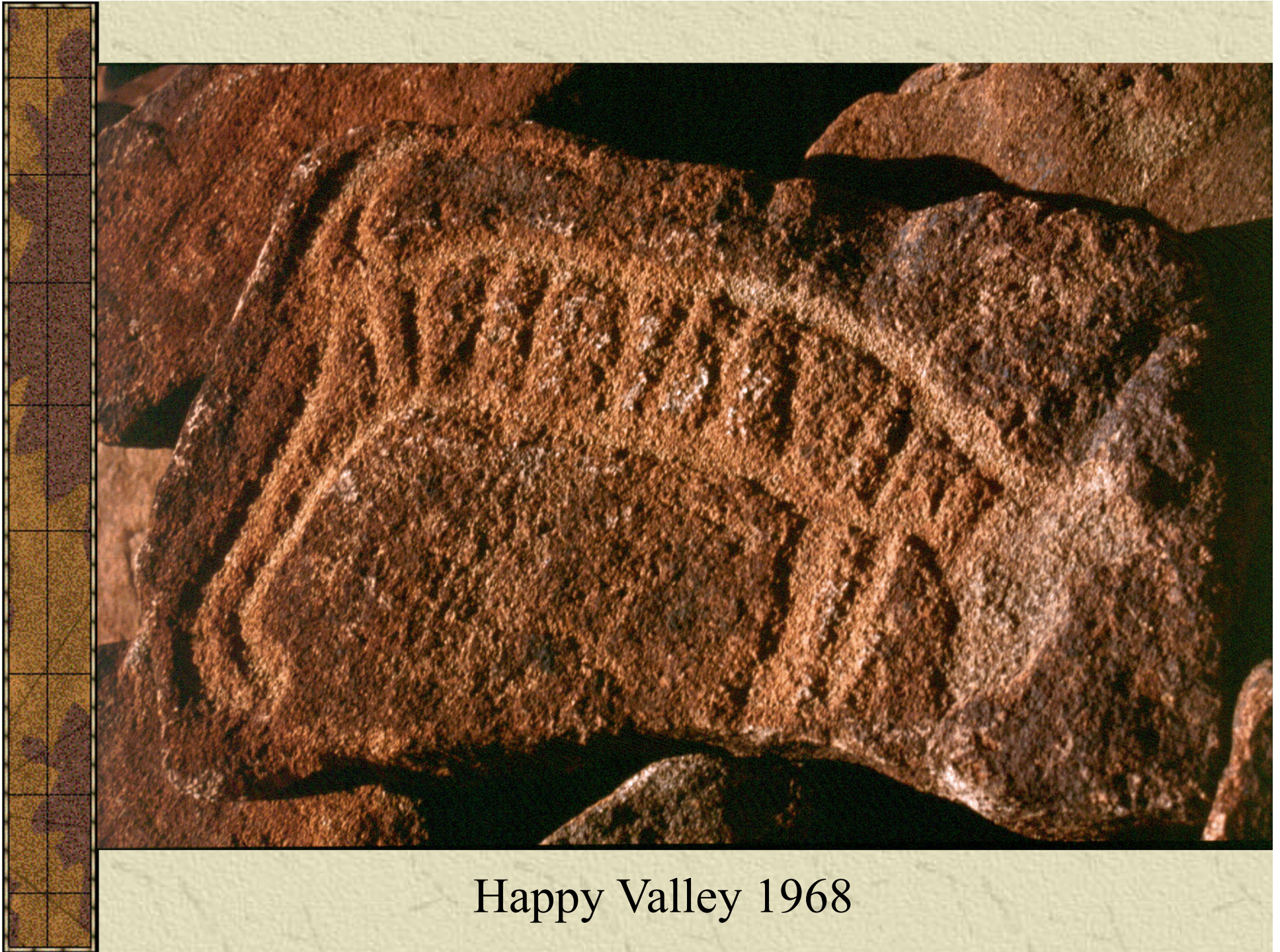
October 1969



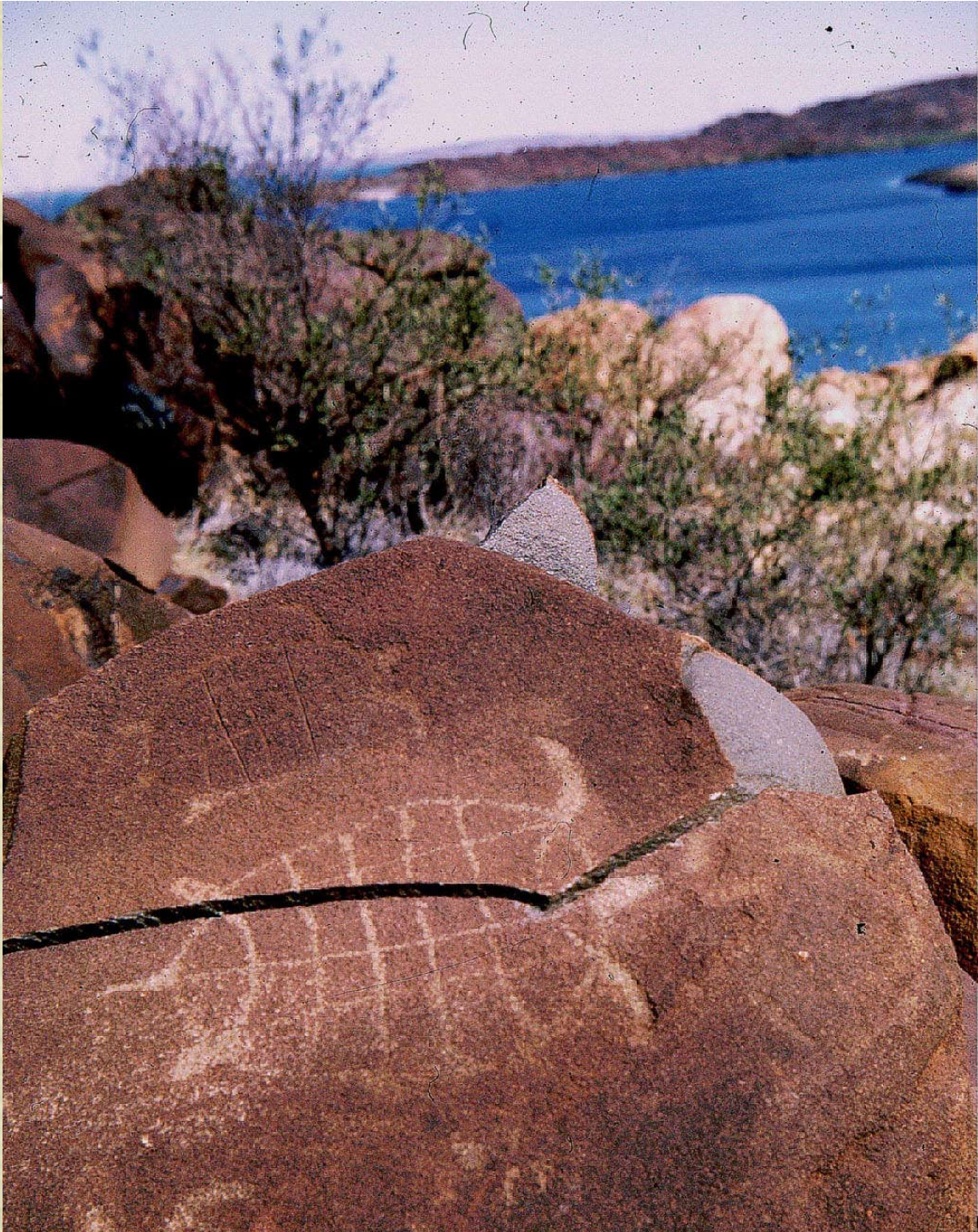








Happy Valley 1968

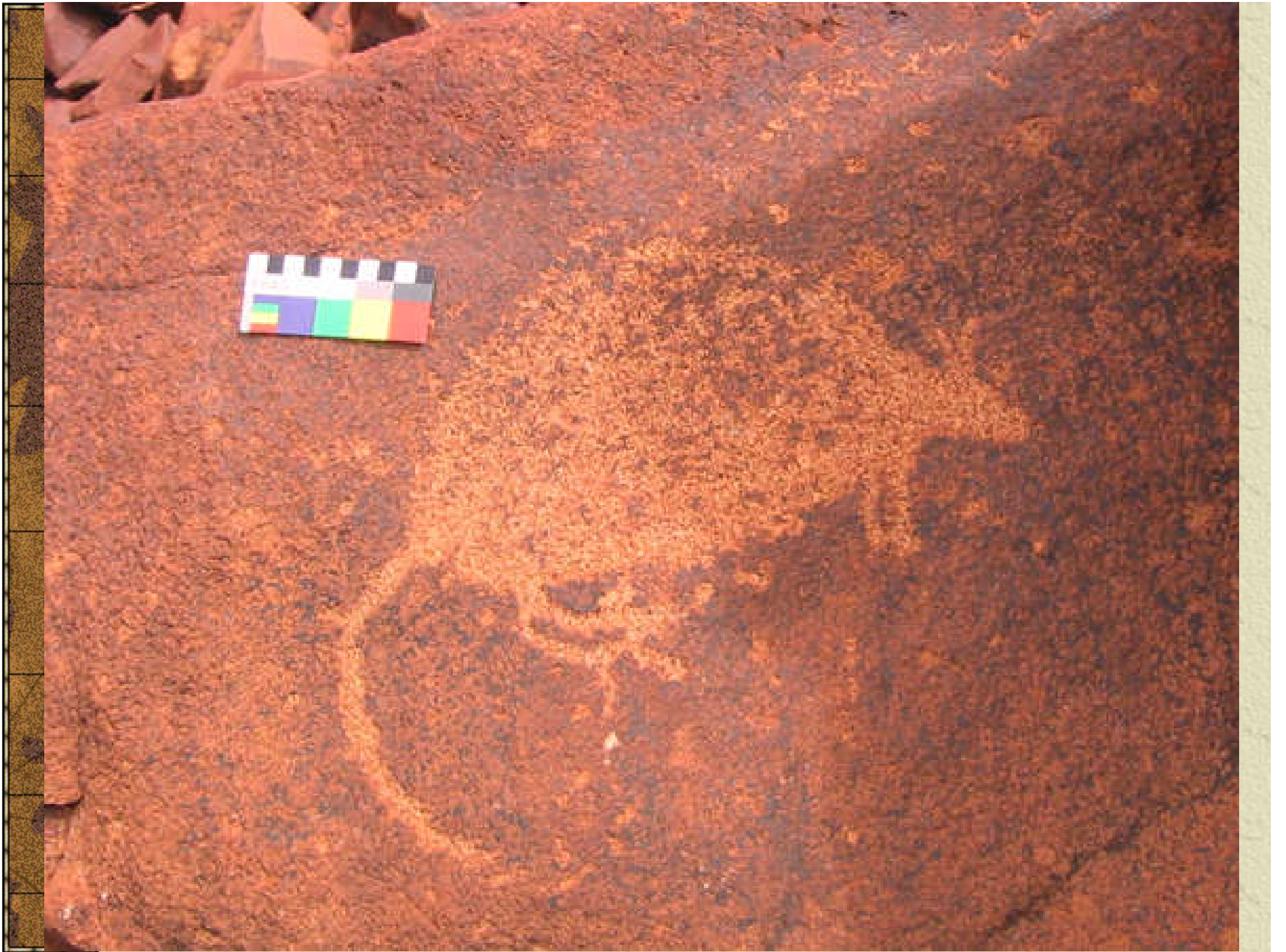




















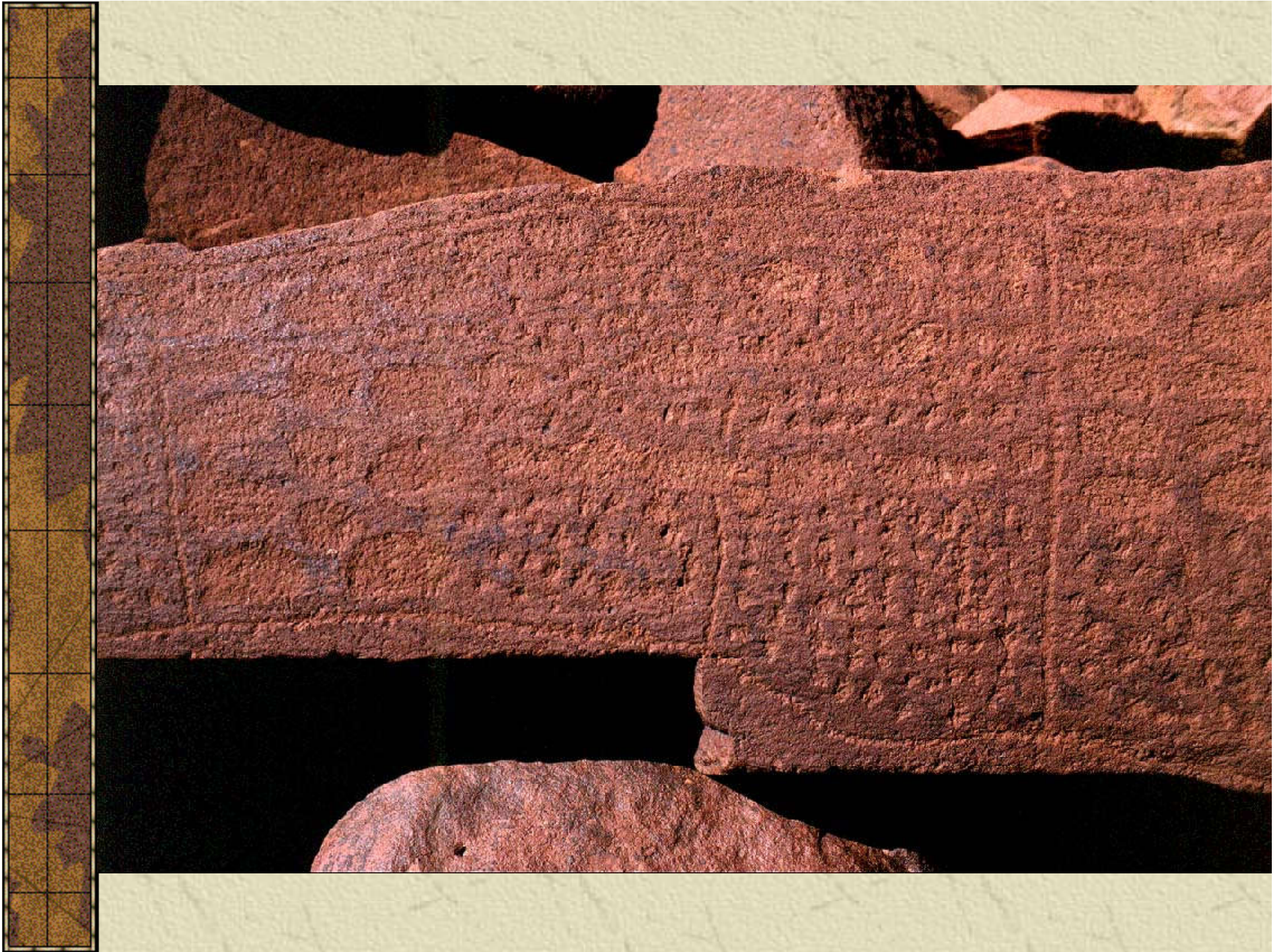
















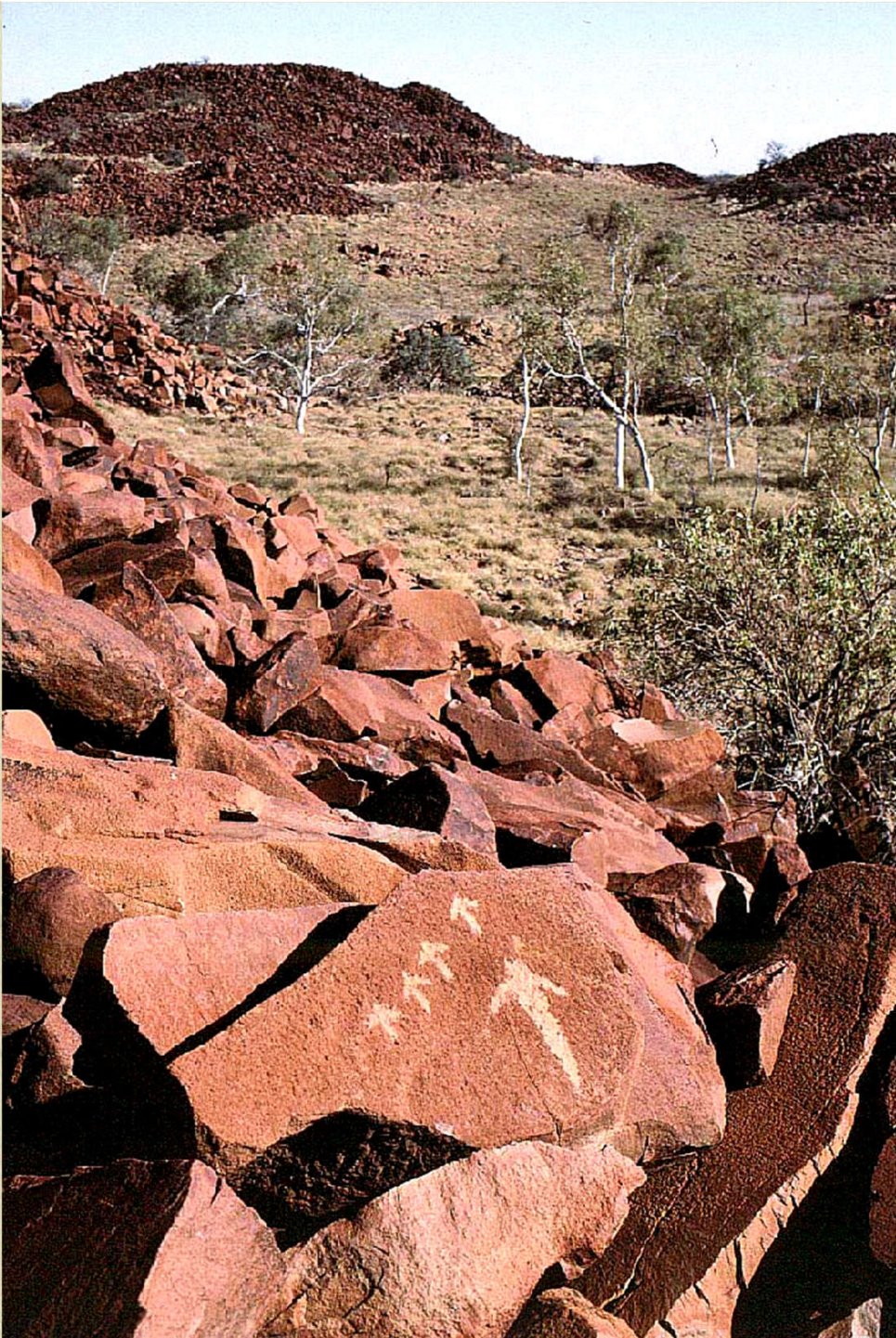


Turtle beach with petroglyphs, eastern coast, Murujuga



















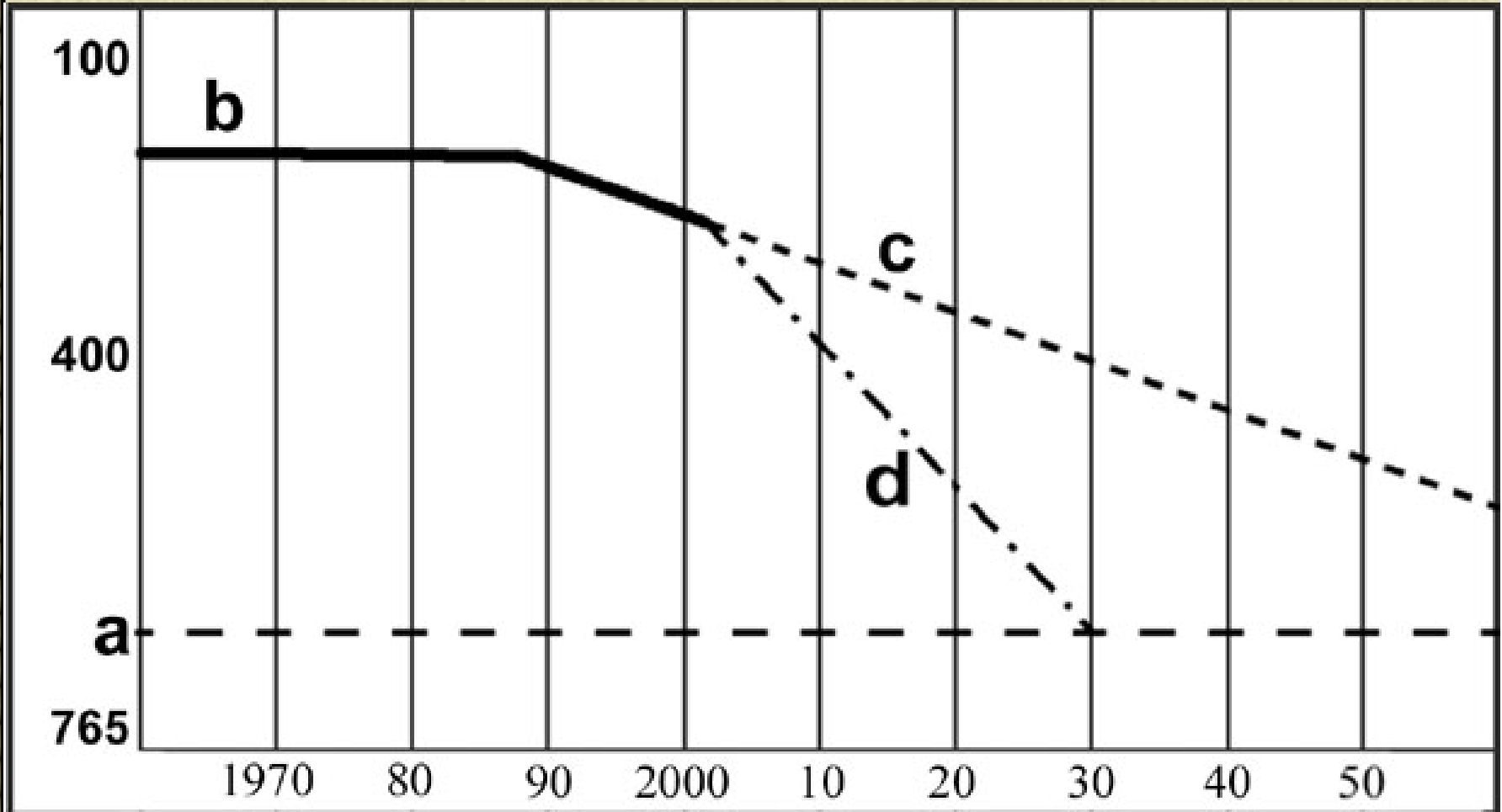
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Deterioration of ferruginous crust: (a) indicates the average threshold value of visibility



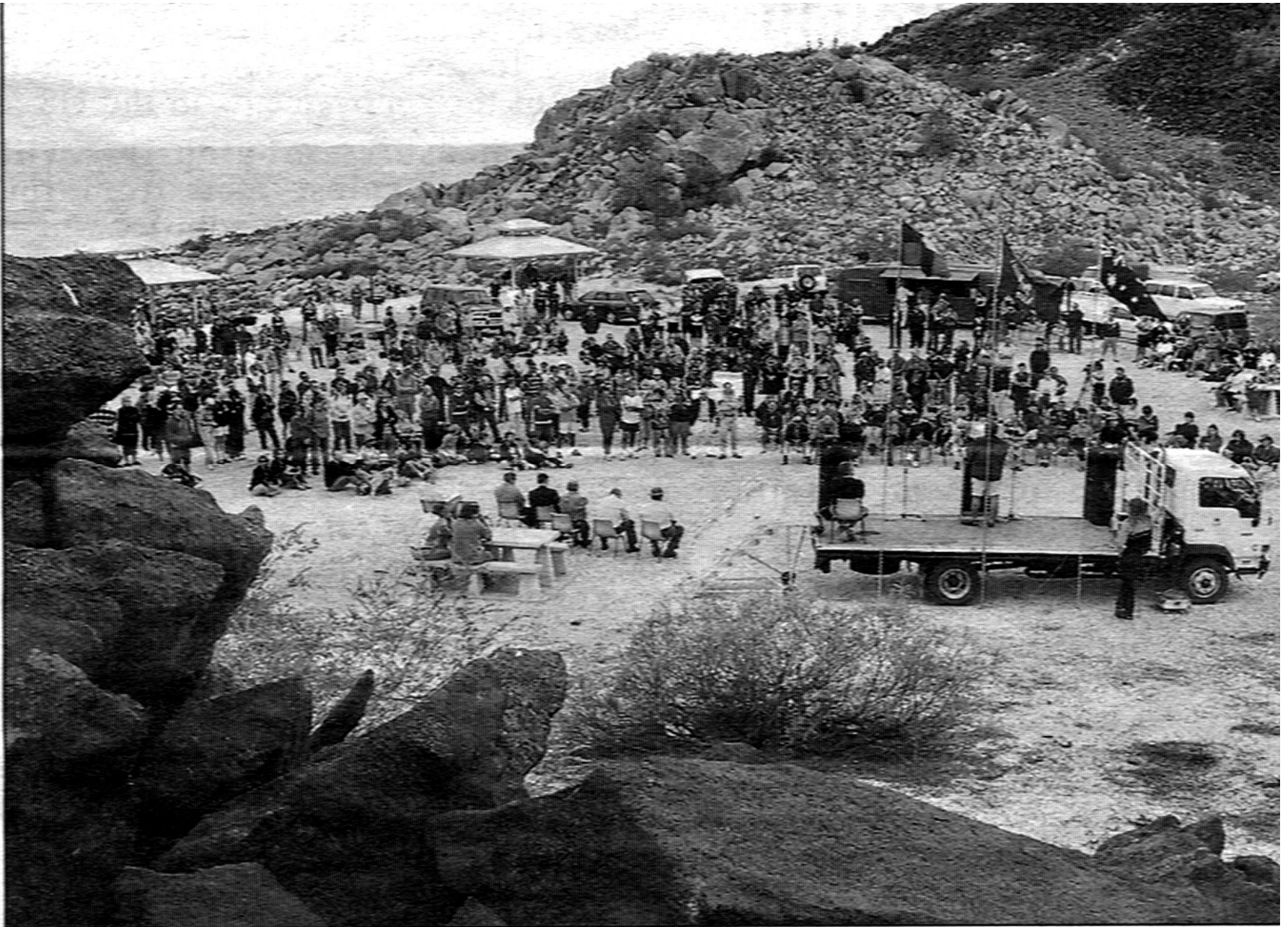




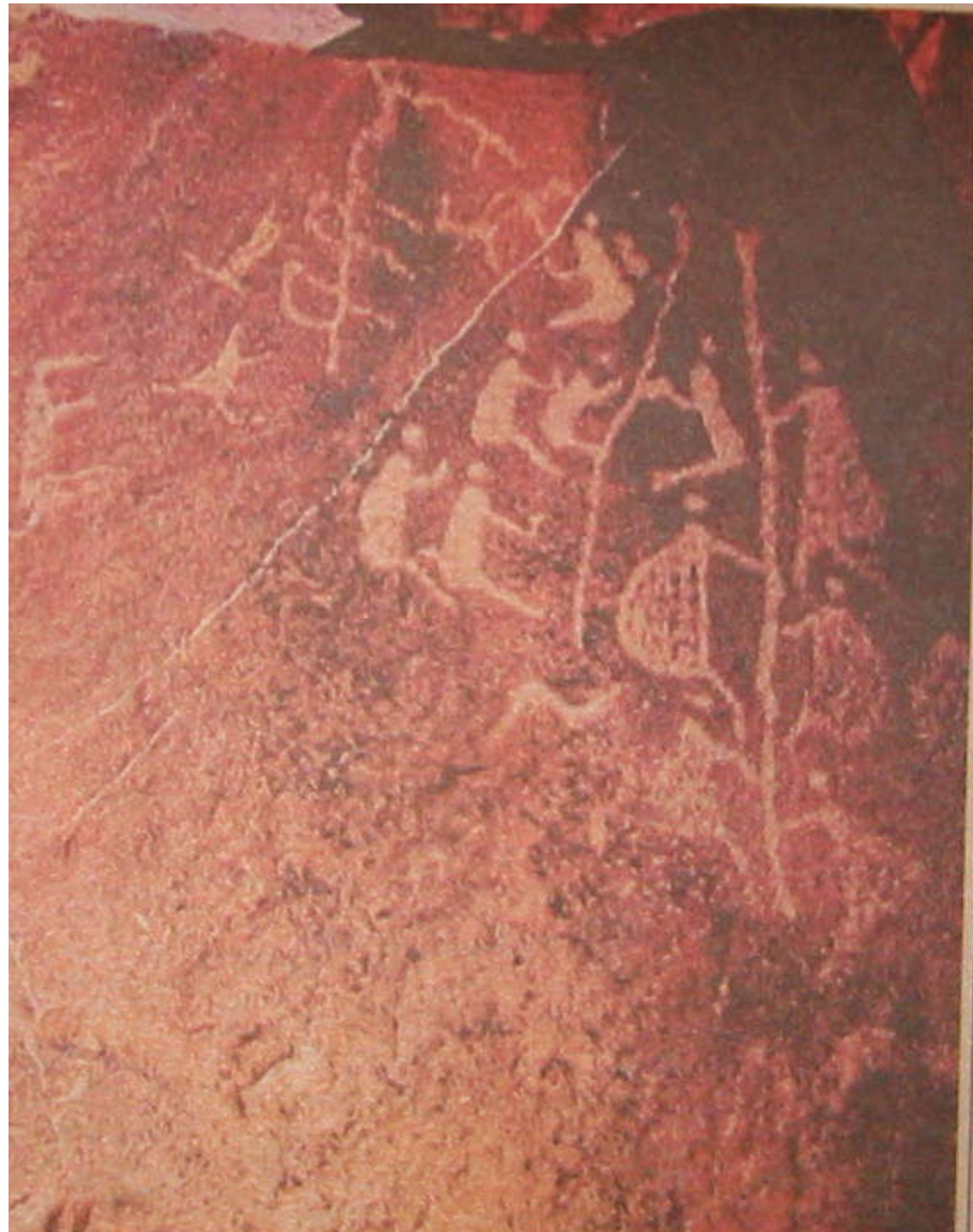




Burrup Fertilisers, June 2004



Hearson Cove rally, June 2002



Ancient secrets of lost art

ITS current European name is borrowed from a murdered bank clerk. But to the Yaburara clan, who traditionally occupied most of the Dampier archipelago and the adjacent mainland, Burrup Peninsula was always known as Murujuga.

The island was re-named Dampier Island in honour of the English navigator who first anchored off the North West coast in 1699. Technically, it became a peninsula when it was connected to the mainland via road and rail during the first wave of development in the 1960s.

In 1979 it was re-named again as the Burrup Peninsula, taking the surname of Henry Thomas Burrup, a clerk for Roebourne's Union Bank who was murdered in 1885.

The first published reports of Pilbara rock art are those in the account of Captain John Wickham, whose ship, the HMAS Beagle, visited Depuch Island in the Dampier archipelago in 1840.

The motifs and roles vary immensely between engravings. Some are images of flora and fauna from the area while some are Dreaming sites. Others have a role as Thalu sites, places of great spiritual power, something equivalent to the Christian notion of a shrine.

A clan member would perform cere-

ng
after the Maitland River, include over 4000ha of flat land to provide broadacre and waterfront land to cater for future processing of iron ore, gas and salt.

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Mr Brown says it's not about one development location versus another; it's more a debate about having development and jobs or not having them. He says that if



"The bottom line is simple. I have done the research, I have done my homework. The government departments have done nothing at all in 40 years about this matter. They don't need a panel to establish that, it already is a clear fact."

projects were moved from their planned location on the Burrup Industrial Estate, they would be lost to Australia.

Mr Riebeling agrees: "The simple fact is if these companies aren't going to Burrup they're going to Indonesia or Chile."

But Mr Bednarik says the real issue is that the government is dithering and procrastinating over Maitland.

"Instead of doing the obvious and getting cracking on it, they argue and waste more time. No construction work has commenced.

Mr Bednarik says he is incredulous that a site of such significance has been ignored for so long.

"Successive state governments have never produced a management plan for the natural or cultural environmental assets of the Dampier Archipelago, nor ever presented an independent impact study, or commissioned a study of the condition of the rock art, despite several recommendations being made by scientists over the years.

"In fact, this government, which by legislation is charged with the protection of

Anti-Burrup bid grows

UNESCO body joins protest at risk to Aboriginal rock art

■ By Daniel Clery

THE International Council on Monuments and Sites has joined the chorus of opposition to development plans for the Burrup Peninsula.

The Paris-based council has urged Premier Geoff Gallop to ensure that the area's unique Aboriginal rock art is protected from industrial emissions from the \$6 billion resources development proposed for the area.

The Government is trying to lure six

gas-processing plants to the Hearson Cove industrial area. Two projects — Burrup Fertilisers and Syntroleum — have environmental approval.

In a letter to Dr Gallop last week, the council's Australian president, William Logan, said the area was of undoubted World Heritage status and the proposed developments should be as far away as possible.

Professor Logan put the number of individual motifs at close to a million. They included Australia's only known engravings of thylacines that were believed to have become extinct on the mainland 3000 years ago.

The council is the principal adviser to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation on the conservation and protection of

historic monuments and sites. Its letter was sent just two days before the Burrup Peninsula was placed on the National Trust endangered list.

Another vocal critic of the plans, the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations, claims the rock art could disappear as early as 2030 if development went ahead.

Labor supports locating all six gas-processing plants on the Hearson Cove industrial estate. The Greens (WA) and One Nation say all development should be at Maitland industrial estate, south of Karratha.

The Nationals have no policy position on the location of the projects and the Liberals believe the Hearson Cove estate can handle only two or three big-scale developments.

Opposition Leader Colin Barnett said yesterday there was legitimate cause for concern over the possible effects of emissions on the area's value. Hearson Cove was an important recreation site for local residents.

Greens (WA) MLC Robin Chapple said the Government had to take notice of growing international pressure, which could ultimately damage the reputation of companies established on the Burrup Peninsula.

State Development Minister Clive Brown said no projects would go ahead without passing a rigorous environmental approvals process.

Any decision which reneged on existing agreements to locate the developments on the Burrup would threaten international investment in WA for years to come.

WA landmarks on endangered list

Murray River system tops list with degradation threat

■ By Minh Lam

THE Burrup Peninsula and East Perth power station have been identified as being among the country's most endangered heritage places.

The sites feature on a list of endangered places released by the

South Australia and Queensland. It is under threat from reduced flows through irrigation and salinity.

"Here is Australia's greatest river system and we have misused it and abused it for a long period of time," Australian Council of National Trusts executive officer Alan Graham said.

"If we can't get the Murray-Darling right, then you have to worry about the smaller water resources we have."

The Burrup Peninsula's natural beauty and Aboriginal rock art are at risk from planned multi-million-dollar industrial developments.

station that would respect its interior and exterior conservation values. She expected a decision to take at least six months.

According to the trust council, a proposed mineral sands mine in the Ludlow-Wonnerup forest and wetlands places the area at risk.

Mr Molesworth said the forest and wetlands held the world's last substantial stand of tuart forest and supported a diverse bird population.

Environment Minister Judy Edwards' spokesman John Carey said a management strategy was being developed for the area.

OUR ENDANGERED HERITAGE

National

- ▶ Remote rural homesteads, neglect
- ▶ Murray River, Australia's longest river system, degradation

Western Australia

- ▶ Ludlow-Wonnerup forest and wetlands, sand mining
- ▶ Pemberton mill workers cottages, inappropriate redevelopment
- ▶ East Perth power station, inappropriate redevelopment
- ▶ Burrup Peninsula, destruction by industrial pollution

Australian Capital Territory

- ▶ Ginninderra blacksmith's shop, neglect
- ▶ Cuthbert Whiteley Houses, demolition
- ▶ School of Instruction building, demolition

New South Wales

- ▶ Regent Theatre, redevelopment
- ▶ Sandon Point, Wollongong, housing development
- ▶ Holsworthy army base, housing development

Northern Territory

- ▶ Adelaide River railway heritage precinct, degradation

Queensland

- ▶ Priefe Plaza police depot, Brisbane, redevelopment
- ▶ Point Lookout, redevelopment

East Perth power station



Murray River



Rock art row put on world stage

Belinda Hickman

THE fight against further development on West Australia's Burrup Peninsula has been taken to the international arena, and local experts in rock art have published damning criticism of government management of the ancient artworks.

In studies of the rock art published in the international journal *Rock Art Research*, specialists Patricia Vinnicombe and Robert Bednarik criticise successive state governments for failing to implement a proper planning process for the area and failing to protect the ancient petroglyphs.

It comes as opposition grows to plans to further expand industry in the area.

Dr Bednarik, who edits the

21st century. "As of March 2002, there is no plan of management for the peninsula, no impact study has ever been attempted by the authorities responsible for the protection of the rock art, and no authority exercises any control over the rock art outside the lease of Dampier Salt," Dr Bednarik warns.

The Burrup has the largest concentration of rock engravings and carvings in the world, and is considered one of the world's major heritage sites.

It is already home to the North West Shelf gas project, and about six new industrial developments worth about \$6 billion have been proposed for the area.

But the Gallop Government has defended the proposals, saying they will not affect the vast majority of rock art in the region and rejected Dr Bednarik's claims the art would be

Rock art in danger

ANCIENT Aboriginal rock art will begin to disappear within 35 years if the planned \$6 billion industrial expansion on the Burrup Peninsula goes ahead, it is claimed.

Pilbara rock carvings and engravings which have survived for up to an estimated 10,500 years could be erased in decades by industry chemical fallout, including acid rain.

International Federation of Rock Art Organisations president Robert Bednarik warns that time is running out to save what is regarded as one of

the world's major cultural heritage sites.

Writing in the international *Rock Art Research Journal*, he claimed up to 25 per cent of the ancient rock carvings had already been lost and the rest was in imminent danger of disappearing.

In May, the State Government announced a raft of new projects for the Burrup Peninsula, which the Conservation Council claimed would produce 8.45 million tonnes of greenhouse gases a year.

Burrup plan shocks rock art campaigners

Belinda Hickman

ROCK art experts campaigning against proposed industrial developments on the Burrup Peninsula have criticised a state government plan for a four-year study on the effects of development on the area's 10,000-year-old etchings.

Australian Rock Art Research Association president Kevin Mulvaney said the \$350,000 study, announced by State Development Minister Clive Brown yesterday, was unlikely to change the Government's determination to proceed

West Australian Government is proceeding," Mr Mulvaney said on ABC radio.

He said campaigners would welcome any findings that suggested no further development should occur.

They believed the rock art could suffer damage from further development and be vulnerable to acid rain from increased emissions.

There is growing public debate about whether the development should go ahead. The Government has already invested heavily to provide infrastructure, and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry has warned the

Burrup claimants hit industry plans

Groundwork on methanol plant continues

■ By Yonnene Pearce

A PILBARA Aboriginal group has delivered what could be a fatal blow to a multi-million-dollar freehold title offer from the State Government to open the Burrup Peninsula to more industry.

One of three Burrup claimant groups, the Wong-Goo-Ti-Oo, said yesterday they would not accept the offer of up to \$27 million, including title to most of the northern part of the peninsula.

Instead they joined the Liberals, One Nation, Greens (WA), pastoralists and graziers, conservationists, the local shire and community in proposing Burrup works be moved to the Maitland industrial area, south-west of



Confrontation: Mr Chapple talks to Methanex workers after work had started on the Burrup site.

Karratha. It has been zoned for heavy industry.

Wong-Goo-Ti-Oo spokesman Cane Hicks said his people wanted the Burrup's ancient rock art and beaches protected and open to all.

But in the wake of the group signing an access agreement recently with proponent Burrup Fertilisers,

Deputy Premier Eric Ripper branded yesterday's rejection a negotiating tactic.

He said the Government was not considering shifting industry to Maitland. The \$6 billion worth of Burrup projects were critical to the State's economy.

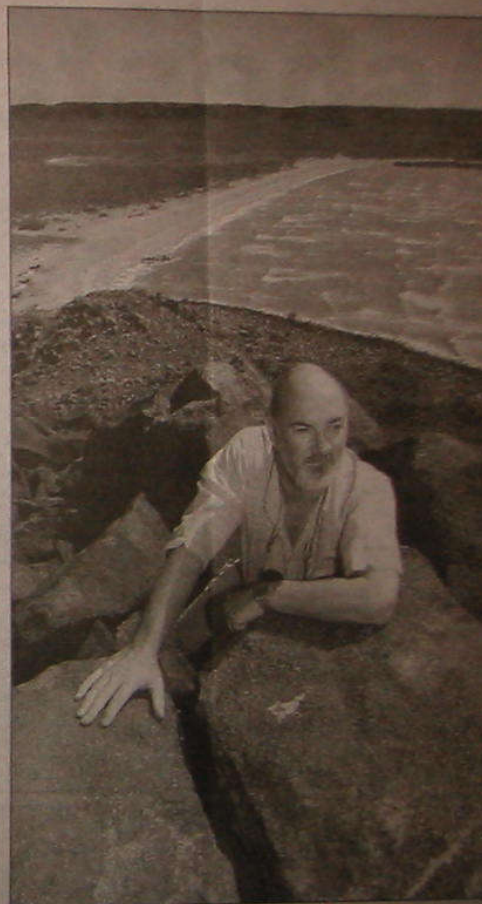
This latest hurdle in negotiation did not stop Methanex

Australia from doing feasibility groundwork on the part of the King Bay Hearson Cove industrial area it plans to turn into the world's biggest methanol plant.

The Environmental Protection Authority's final report on the proposal is still months away. But according to Brian Wood, of the Office of Major Projects, authority for investigative groundwork was given by the Department of Land Administration and Woodside, which holds a lease over part of the proposed plant site.

Greens (WA) MLC Robin Chapple said giving Methanex access pre-empted decisions by working on the assumption the proposal would be approved.

He called on Premier Geoff Gallop to address publicly growing concerns about industries still at the proposal stage, and access, amenity and the protection of rock art carvings on the peninsula.



Access concerns: Greens (WA) MLC Robin Chapple overlooks Hearson Cove. PICTURES: DIONE DAVIDSON



Hundreds march to save rock art

Layla Tucak

HUNDREDS of people yesterday marched on the Burrup Peninsula in Western Australia's remote north to protest against the state Government's endorsement of six new multi-billion dollar industries which they claim could destroy the area's ancient rock art.

The Burrup, near Karratha,

contains the world's highest known concentration of engraved rock art, or petroglyphs, believed to be up to 10,500 years old. But it is also home to Australia's prosperous northwest gas industry.

The open-air art gallery, which protesters claim successive governments have failed to recognise by committing money to its conservation, impressed Prince Charles when he visited the area in the early 90s.

Yesterday about 600 people,

including representatives from Roebourne Shire, the Greens, One Nation and the Wong-Goo-Ti-Oo — one of three Aboriginal groups that claim ownership of the land — met State Development Minister Clive Brown to protest against the plans.

The proposal includes ammonia, fertiliser and methanol plants.

Greens MLC Robin Chapple said the state and federal governments together had committed \$220 million to the

development but not a cent to conservation of the area.

He said there had never been a comprehensive environmental assessment of the Burrup or of the 1 million historic engravings.

Months after Premier Geoff Gallop delivered a speech on sustainability, the Government approved a \$400 million Hismelt pig iron plant at Kwinana, committed millions to the Burrup development and appears to be pushing for at least one new coal-fired power

station. Community consultation has been a catchcry of the Government but Roebourne Shire claims it was not applied to them in relation to the Burrup plans.

Protesters yesterday said it would be a "crime" and a "tragedy" to develop the Burrup especially when a nearby industrial estate at Maitland could be used as an alternative site.

Mr Chapple said the \$220 million subsidy would be better spent at Maitland.

"Maitland would be cheaper to develop because the site costs are halved ... the Burrup is all rock. Maitland isn't," he said.

"And industry emissions would not blow over the rock art and the town — like they would on the Burrup."

But Mr Brown said advice to the Government was that Maitland would be the more costly venture due to the amount of infrastructure needed. He said the state stood to lose billions of dollars

if the developments did ahead on the Burrup.

"It takes a long time to secure these investments. The Government must have its agreements," Mr Brown said.

Environment Minister Edwards defended the Government's stand.

"Any development will be a power station industry on the Burrup go pass an environmental impact assessment,"

THE WEST AUSTRALIAN MONDAY JUNE 10 2002 15

Warning over Burrup move



Protesters reject site for industrial development

By Liz Tickner and Peter Trott

SHIFTING industrial development planned for the Burrup Peninsula to Maitland, near Karratha, would mean the loss of projects, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry has warned.

The warning, in a letter to Premier Geoff Gallop, came as 600 protesters almost unanimously rejected Burrup as a location for industrial development.

Chamber chief executive Lyndon Rowe said many of the proponents of the \$6 billion wave of industrial projects were likely to pull out if land at Burrup was not made available.

"The proponents of the projects earmarked for the Burrup Peninsula have in good faith undertaken a considerable amount of site selection and design work," he

"The Maitland option would extend the project time line to the point where the window for opportunity for a particular project's development could be lost.

"Western Australia cannot afford the perception that it is difficult to do business in the Pilbara."

Mr Rowe said a survey of the resource and energy sector in 1999 found Maitland was unpopular as a heavy industrial site.

Maitland — which is 16km inland — was ranked sixth, with Kwinana in first place and Burrup second.

Mr Rowe said that if development were to occur at Maitland, the Government would be faced with the prospect of having to provide a land bridge connecting the site to port infrastructure.

"This would cost several hundred million dollars, before even considering other infrastructure needs such as power and water," he said.

Greens (WA) MLC Robin Chapple said that the Burrup site had been rejected by almost all the 600 protesters at a rally at Hearson's Cove, Burrup.

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Ms Brown said many
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elstra) than ever," Ms
said.

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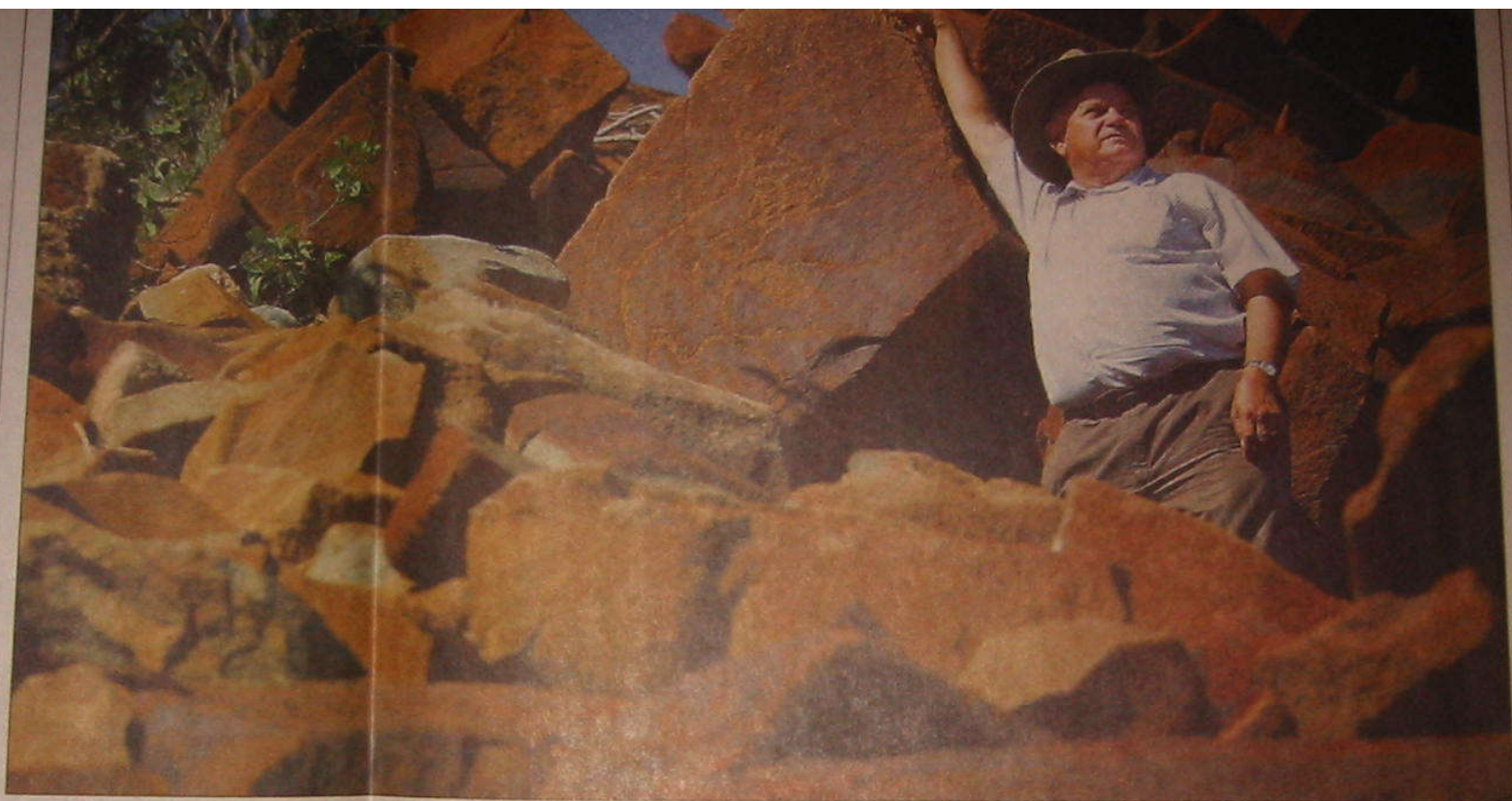
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Concern: Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo custodian Wilfred Hicks with ancient rock art depicting a kangaroo at Bloodwood Creek near Burrup Peninsula

Picture: Andy Tyndall

A royal campaign to save rock art

Layla Tucak

PRINCE Charles has come to the aid of environmentalists campaigning to save a priceless collection of rock art at Burrup Peninsula.

The prince, who visited the area in 1994, has responded to an appeal from campaigners fighting a planned expansion of industry on the peninsula.

Concern is growing over the effect of increased pollution on the area's famous rock engravings, or petroglyphs, believed to be up to 10,500 years old. Within seven days of receiving a letter asking for assistance from Greens MP Robin Chapple, Prince Charles's office replied saying he had asked his staff to

'His Royal Highness was concerned to learn of the threat to the Burrup Peninsula'

Nigel Baker
Assistant private secretary to Prince Charles

investigate the threat. "His Royal Highness was concerned to learn of the threat to the Burrup Peninsula and has asked me to do a little research before considering a more substantial reply," reads the letter from Nigel Baker, assistant private secretary to the prince at St James's Palace in London.

"This may take a little time but, in the meantime, this comes with the Prince of Wales's best wishes."

The letter comes amid growing con-

cerns among locals in nearby Karra-
tha, Aboriginal groups and environ-
mentalists about the state
Government's endorsement of six pro-
posed multi-billion-dollar industrial
developments they believe could con-
tribute to the destruction of the art-
work through increased emissions.

Lobbyists say \$220 million commit-
ted by the state and federal govern-
ments to the developments would be
enough to develop infrastructure at

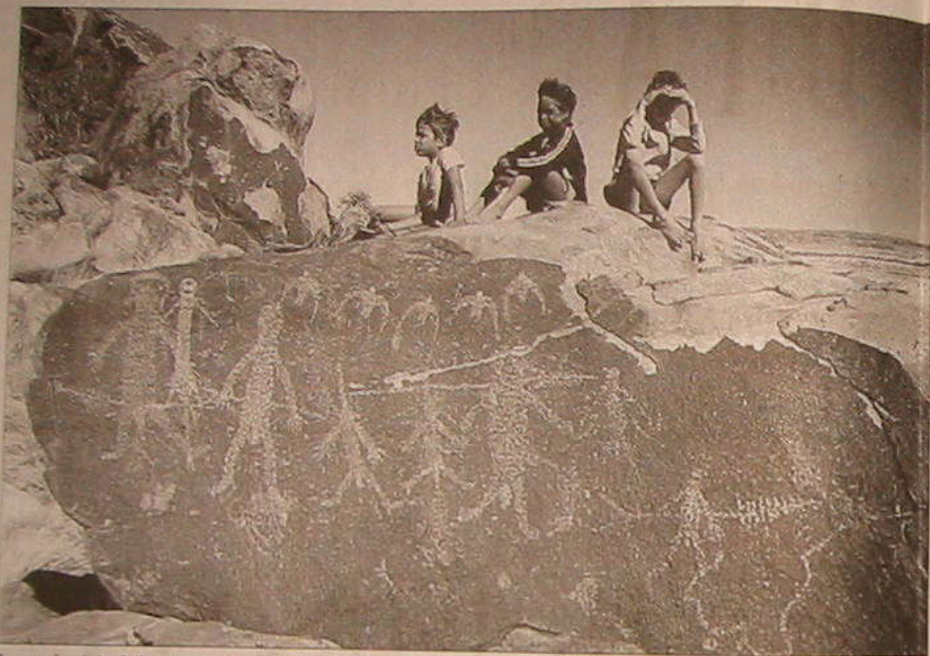
the nearby industrial estate at Mait-
land, which could cater for many more
developments and had no rock art.

Three indigenous claimant groups
must sign off to pave the way for the
expansion, but one — the Wong-Goo-
Tt-Oo people — refuses to do so.

The signatures of claimants from
the two other groups are still outstand-
ing, although their lawyers expect
them to sign off on the deal soon.

Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo traditional custod-
ian Wilfred Hicks said yesterday his
people were very concerned about the
future of the rock art on the Burrup.

"(The development) is destroying
our artwork. In another 10 years time
it will be all gone," he said.



Jonge aboriginals bovenop een rots met tekeningen in de Dampier Archipel. © R. Bednarik



Rotstekening van een kangoeroe in de Dampier Archipel. © R. Bednarik

REGERING WIL INDUSTRIEZONE OP SITE VAN ABORIGINALS IN AUSTRALIË

Schat van rotstekeningen bedreigd

ARCHEOLOGIE

Van onze medewerker Dirk Huyge

BRUSSEL — In Australië en langzamerhand ook wereldwijd groeit fel protest tegen de plannen van de West-Australische deelregering om de Dampier Archipel in het noord-

1868. Slechts zes van de honderd tot tweehonderd aboriginals overleefden de genocide.

Tot op vandaag heeft de regering van West-Australië de sacrale rotskunstsites niet overgedragen aan de afstammelingen van

vasteland die volkomen onbewoond zijn, geen bijzondere landschappelijke waarde hebben en ook geen belangrijke archeologische resten herbergen, komen veel meer in aanmerking voor zo'n inplanting.

pers becijferden dat de rotstekeningen al omstreeks 2030 zouden beginnen te verdwijnen.

De International Federation of Rock Art Organisations (Ifrao), die wereldwijd 39 nationale en regionale instanties groepeerd die iveren voor de studie en het



Western Australia

Barnett renews call to spare Burrup

ryn Shine

E listing of the Burrup Peninsula on the west coast's region is endangered by a proposed development. The site is opposite the Burrup Peninsula, where some chemical plants are located near the southwest coast. Maitland is flanked by...

There are no significant environmental constraints or Aboriginal constraints," he said.

WEST AUSTR. 25-7-02 p. 30

Acid test for Burrup rock art

By Yonnene Pearce

THE State Government is to set up a four-year study into the effects of industrial emissions on Aboriginal rock art on the Burrup Peninsula.

The decision to fund the \$350,000 study would not delay multi-billion-dollar developments earmarked for the area, Development Minister Clive Brown said.

With six major industrial projects planned for the peninsula, near Karatha, the area is poised for an industrial boom.

The International

build a large industrial complex at Burrup Peninsula," he said. He said a management plan for the Burrup, released while he was resources minister in 1997, had concluded Maitland was the better site for an industrial complex.

"What dismays me is that the Labor Government has completely ignored three years of careful work," he said.

But West Australian Development Minister Clive Brown

'There are no significant environmental or Aboriginal constraints (at Maitland)'

Colin Barnett
State Opposition Leader

able alternative.

"He would know that the increased ongoing costs to industry of piping water, gas and end products greater distances to and from Maitland would make many projects unviable," he said.

ern Australia's international reputation in cancelling existing agreements with project proponents could threaten international investment in Western Australia for years into the future."

The peninsula already has "trains", or

West Shelf gas project, and a fifth is due to be built as part of the \$25 billion contract signed with China earlier this month.

The National Trust last week named the Burrup Peninsula as one of 23 endangered places in Australia. The site was assessed according to its social, aesthetic, scientific and historic importance.

Ben Bednarik, president of the International Federation of Rock Art, nominated the region.

"Because of the close proximity of many of its hundreds of sites, the complex can be regarded as essentially a single gallery," Dr Bednarik said.

"Its neglect and proposed destruction is scandalous. National Trust of Western Australia spokeswoman Glenda Bye said the trust not necessarily oppose development at the Burrup, but did want to see a long-term impact study carried out.

"The problem with heritage is that you can't change your mind after it is gone," she

Ancient N-W rock art destroyed or missing

ANCIENT Aboriginal rock art in the state's North-West is under threat.

Pieces of the rare work, locked in a fenced compound on the Burrup Peninsula for 20 years, are missing.

Others have been destroyed or damaged. The unique collection of almost 2000 boulders was put behind the wire when Woodside started its North-West Shelf gas project.

A report obtained by *The Sunday Times* shows that:

- Several boulders are missing.
- Some are cracked and fragmented.

The report says further investigation is needed.

"The over-arching recommendation from this report is that the future of the Hearson compound needs to be fully discussed with relevant local Aboriginal communities... people are generally unhappy with the compound in its present state," the report said.

"Some engraved boulders have special significance and need to be treated separately from the main body of engravings."

flooded them

P. 7, THE AGE, 26-9-2003

WA rock art on danger list — and 'how embarrassing'

The inclusion of ancient West Australian rock art on a list of the world's most endangered sites was an international embarrassment for the state, a leading rock art scientist said yesterday.

The Burrup Peninsula rock art — the world's largest collection of petroglyphs — is the only Australian site named by the World Monuments Fund on its 100 Most Endangered Sites list. The Burrup collection is thought to be up to 10,500 years old.

Robert Bednarik of the Inter-

national Federation of Rock Art Organisations, who pushed for the listing, said the artwork was in critical danger of being eroded by industrial emissions within 30 years unless future development was stopped.

Construction work alone is believed to have destroyed an estimated 20 per cent of the renderings so far.

This international condemnation was a huge embarrassment for the State Government, Mr Bednarik said.

Other sites on the list include the Great Wall of China and ancient palaces in Iraq.

The Greens have said the Burrup could be destroyed by acidic industrial emissions by 2035 unless plans are shelved for further developments linked to Woodside Petroleum's North-West Shelf gas project.

Last year, Prince Charles asked his staff to investigate the threat to the art, having visited in the 1990s.

The rock art joins other first-



The Burrup Peninsula rock art.

time entries to the 100 Most Endangered Sites list, including Ernest Shackleton's expedition hut in Antarctica. AAP





Visions of the past The world's most endangered rock art

A public exhibition by the Australian Rock Art Research Association, Inc. (AURAA)
and the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations (IFRAO)



Largest rock art concentration of the world, the
Gampier Archipelago, Western Australia



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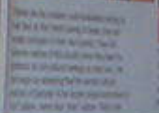
No government would advocate the establishment of a petrochemical plant at Stonehenge, but when confronted with a monument many times greater in their own state, successive WA governments thought nothing of needlessly bulldozing the Dampier monument. It simply did not occur to them that they were perpetrating cultural vandalism on a grand scale.

What are the reasons for this profound inability to comprehend the enormity of the decision to destroy the sacred cultural precinct of Dampier?



Stop state vandalism at Dampier rock art sites: It is just another form of state terrorism - against the common heritage of all mankind." (Dr Thomas Schultze Westrum, Greece)

WA lags far behind the standards of cultural heritage protection of the other Australian states and territories, where indigenous culture is much better protected and appreciated. The reason is not only political, it is structural as well. There is an underlying assumption by government that the public of WA lacks cultural sophistication and environmental awareness, that the sole role of WA is to be of a source of raw materials for the world, and that it is impossible for a cultural monument of world significance to exist in this remote part of the world.



It reflects a subconscious attempt to be distinguished by a comparison. The French had considerable pride in regarding the Pyramids as one of the wonders of the world. The ancient Egyptians regarded the Giza pyramids as the greatest achievement of their civilization. The French is a false analogy. They were the direct descendants of the Phoenicians who, as direct French people would have to concede, were the greatest of all such people. The French were skilled by nature, rather than practice, and for centuries along the Mediterranean.



"The Dampier rock art is the world's only monument of such significance that has to share its location with an industrial estate."
Barry Burrows, President, World Monuments Fund

In present Australia, when a large number of citizens can help determine where their political interests are best served, it is not surprising that the Dampier rock art is being destroyed. Although it is a world heritage site, the Dampier rock art is being destroyed. Many aspects of the Dampier rock art, such as the petroglyphs, are being destroyed. The Dampier rock art is being destroyed. The Dampier rock art is being destroyed.







The government is obliged, through the Venice Charter of 1964 as well as Australia's own Aboriginal Heritage Act supposedly provides legislative protection, but the government has repeatedly flouted the law at every opportunity. At Dampier, 80% of the applications for companies to mine rock art sites are summarily rejected by the Aboriginal Heritage Act. In short, the protection of indigenous culture is a complete failure in Western Australia, the state itself being the primary cultural vandal.



Preserved specimen of a Thyroptera, a species that is thought to have been extinct on the island since about 2000 years ago. It is the most recent specimen of this species known to science.



Spectacular megalithic stone arrangement with heavy concentration of rock art, Murujuga, Dampier Archipelago. This is one of several types of stone arrangements found in the sacred cultural precinct.



The Aboriginal communities of the Dampier region have no prerogative in the endemic destruction of their patrimony, and their attempts to regain custodianship of their traditional sacred sites have been thwarted by the state, which also refuses to establish a National Park at Dampier and to support a bid for nomination for World Heritage listing — which the federal government supports.



Saving the rock

The International Federation of Naturalists and Organisations has campaigned to preserve the sacred cultural precinct of Dampier. The National Trust has listed Dampier on its List of Endangered Places in August 2002. In September 2002, Dampier was included by the World Monuments Fund in the 100 Most Threatened Sites in the World, becoming the first Australian site to be so listed. In February 2005, Dampier was included in the List of Most Threatened Sacred Sites of the International Sacred Sites Network. The federal government still refuses to establish a National Park at Dampier, or to regulate mining industries elsewhere, or to regulate other industries to reduce acidic emissions.

As the largest art gallery in the world, the Dampier cultural precinct is a unique cultural monument. The State of Western Australia is the world's most recalcitrant cultural vandal. In doing this, it opposes international opinion, it undermines the ecological and cultural predecessor sought to exterminate. In doing this, it undermines the ecological and cultural predecessor sought to exterminate. In doing this, it undermines the ecological and cultural predecessor sought to exterminate.

"A State that intentionally destroys or intentionally fails to take appropriate measures to prohibit, prevent or punish any intentional destruction of heritage of great importance, whether or not it is inscribed on the World Heritage List, is in breach of its responsibility for such destruction, and the extent provided for by international law." UNESCO Declaration concerning the Destruction of Cultural Heritage, Article 1.





The past Endangered rock art

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A Division of Rock Art Organisation (RAO)



Concentration of the world, the
Dampier, Western Australia

Rock art

Rock art includes the rock paintings (Pitjara) before the invention of written communication. It is often the only remaining evidence of past human images of reality and it records the beliefs and customs of indigenous peoples around the globe, since the beginning of human culture. Rock art is the only major body of evidence of culture from the first 90% of human history, and it is one of humanity's most valuable cultural possessions.

Contrary to popular tradition, rock art is still being made, especially in changing environmental conditions. It is a non-renewable and irreplaceable resource, yet humanity makes images of various types from uncalibrated to sophisticated in recent times. Among them are especially important petroglyphs with significant development.

Rock art has been found in almost all countries of the world but is distributed very unevenly. Australia has the most rock art, followed by Europe, Africa, the Middle East, the Americas, and the Pacific. The rock art of Australia is the most diverse and extensive in the world.

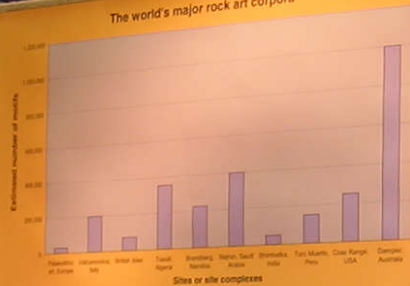
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The world's largest concentration of petroglyphs is believed to be at the Western Australian Pilbara, and the greatest single site complex is that of the Dampier Archipelago. The Dampier rock art precinct is Australia's largest cultural heritage site. It is also one of the most outstanding cultural monuments of the world, especially in importance many famous sites in other continents. Besides featuring the world's largest petroglyph galleries, the Dampier Archipelago also houses Australia's greatest concentration of megalithic arrangements (standing stones and other rock arrangements, as in the above example).



The world's major rock art corpora



The Dampier Archipelago

It is the number of individual motifs that determines the size of a rock art monument. The number of motifs occurring at Dampier is unknown, because despite many demands for the establishment of a full inventory of the petroglyphs, no proper survey has been attempted. Conservative estimates of the number of petroglyphs on the largest of the islands, presently called Burup (its correct name is Murujuga or Paraterra), range from 300,000 to 800,000, and the total number for the entire Archipelago is thought to be in excess of one million motifs or images. This is well in excess of any other site complex or region.



Waling Cove, eastern Murujuga (Burup)



Dampier Archipelago

The Dampier Archipelago consists of forty-two islands close to the coast of Western Australia, about 1650 km north of Perth. Prior to British colonisation, the Dampier Archipelago was occupied by the Yaburra (a sub-tribe of the Ngalyama, living in the Archipelago's eastern parts) and the Marudubura (western parts). They considered the hundreds of sacred sites near Dampier handed down to them since the Dreamtime — the time when spirits created the world.



Australia

The Dampier rock art

Owing to the wisdom of not displaying the rock art in museums, it could yield without sustaining permanent damage. The Dampier rock art precinct is one of the finest cultural monuments in the world — no less important than, for example, Stonehenge, Lascaux or the Acropolis. Its myriad images depict the concerns and beliefs of the islands' original human inhabitants. To the uninitiated, they present an incredible diversity of imagery. There are no two identical pictures.



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Some images seem to depict readily recognisable animals, human forms and other objects. Others are inscrutable patterns of a metaphysical reality well beyond the comprehension of the cultural outsider. These patterns of the world and the fabric of reality, and their simultaneousity, these patterns on the rock art are the quintessential testament of humanity's belief in the Dreamtime, the past and ever-present phases of the patterns, cycles and laws of reality as we know them. Understanding of the concept of the Dreamtime, though some aspects of it have been revealed, is still in its infancy.

Some of the rock art of the Dampier Archipelago is sacred, particularly where paraphernalia of secret ceremonies are concerned. Some motifs are mere metaphors of more intricate and sacred constructs, which may be viewed unrestricted. Other metaphors may themselves be sacred. Some sacred images may be viewed by the uninitiated, because what they see is not what the informed beholder perceives.

"The Dampier rock art precinct is Australia's largest cultural heritage site."

The alternatives

The general consensus of the Dampier rock art precinct is to be preserved in situ. The Dampier rock art precinct is to be preserved in situ. The Dampier rock art precinct is to be preserved in situ. The Dampier rock art precinct is to be preserved in situ.



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Cargo cult at Dampier: road to nowhere