
The cultural evolution of the Western Sahara after the statistical analysis and the geographic distribution of the prehistoric rock-art

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Résumé

The long term conflict for the control of the Western Sahara has constrained the archaeological research for 40 years and has impacted to a great extent on the selection of the archaeological sources and methodologies. In this context most of the research of the University of Girona has been focused on the study and protection of the most exposed heritage, specially rock art. Since 1995 our team has been documenting rock-art sites with the aim to discover the chronocultural evolution of the Western Sahara in absence of complementary archaeological sources that can not be obtained in the actual context. As result, a set of regional styles sorted in relative chronological order have been defined with the rock-paintings. However the stylistic classification of the engravings, which are far more abundant and territorially widespread, has always been a major unresolved challenge. In our contribution we introduce the results of statistical analysis developed on a representative sample of more than 5.000 Western Saharan paintings and engravings, which are helpful in order to determine the styles of engravings. These results, coupled with accumulating evidence of thematic coincidences between paintings and engravings, will be discussed in order to evaluate the effectiveness of this methodological approach. Finally the chronology and geographic distribution of the styles will be presented in order to interpret the cultural evolution detected by the rock art studies.

Mots-Clés: Western Sahara, rock art, prehistory

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