



A New Rock Art Discovery in Spain

by Jon Harman

This past July I presented a paper at a conference (56º Congreso de Americanistas) in Salamanca, Spain. My talk was part of a session on Yuman hunter gatherers (Cazadores-recolectores, agricultores y ceramistas yumanos) organized by Antonio Porcayo, Mexicali Archaeologist. I gave a talk on the colorful El Vallecitos (also called La Rumorosa) pictograph site in northern Baja California.

Salamanca is a beautiful town famous for its university. Founded in 1134 it is among the oldest in Europe. For the past 600 years students have painted a symbol made up of the letters VICTOR in bull's blood on the walls of the university when they have graduated. Today many of the interior and exterior walls of the university have been covered in these symbols and other paintings. Figure 1 shows a DStretch enhancement of a university wall covered in painting (the actual painting is much faded). There are several VICTOR symbols visible. One can be seen at the upper right. Why this may be of interest will be seen later.

Because of DStretch I had been in contact with a professor at the University of Salamanca, Professor Julián Bécares Pérez. Prof Bécares had used DStretch to great effect on rock art around Sal-



photos Jon Harman

amanca. He most graciously offered to take us (the Baja California archaeologists, my wife Sheila, and myself) to see a rock art region that he had studied. So, on a day after our session was finished Prof Bécares took us on a tour of Las Batuecas, a valley a little less than 2 hours from Salamanca.

Because of DStretch I had been in contact with a professor at the University of Salamanca, Professor Julián Bécares Pérez. Prof Bécares had used DStretch to great effect on rock art around Salamanca. He most graciously offered to take us (the Baja California archaeologists, my wife Sheila, and myself) to see a rock art region that he had studied. So, on a day after our session was finished Prof Bécares took us on a tour of Las Batuecas, a valley a little less than 2 hours from Salamanca.

The valley is in a rugged region of steep cliffs and forested hills. It contains a convent founded in 1599. The rock art has been known for a long time. In the late 18th century (Bécares, see references) Antonio Ponz, a painter and traveler mentions the paintings in his work *Viaje de España* (1772–1794). The paintings may have been obliquely mentioned in (the famous Spanish playwright and poet) Lope de Vega's play "«Las Batuecas del Duque de Alba» written in 1598. The Abbé Breuil visited the

Inside this issue:

- Being Safe Around Rattlesnakes by Bill Drake.....6
- Rock Art site near Flagstaff by Chris Galapp.....7
- Rock Art Studies Database update.....8

Chris Galapp, editor -- cgalapp@gmail.com



Figure 2: View of Batuecas Valley from a pass high above.

region in 1910 after learning about it from an article by Vicente Pared in 1909. Before Breuil's arrival he sent Juan Cabré to explore the valley. Breuil (see references) described the rock art in a paper published in 1918. This was after he had broken with Cabré in a dispute over the chronology of Levantine art (or perhaps over Spanish control over its own Rock Art). The rock art at Batuecas is within the Schematic rock art tradition of the Iberian Peninsula.

We visited several sites, I will only show some images from two (actually three including the new one). The sites have been known for hundreds of years and of course have suffered much degradation. They are protected now by iron fences and bars. Prof Bécars, who has been studying the rock art for 40 years, had the keys so we got a special chance to view the rock art up close. The sites were in rugged cliffs and could be rather difficult to access, but there are parking lots for cars and a system of hiking trails. The day we visited was a beautiful warm sunny day.

El Canchal del las Cabras Pintadas



Figure 3: Our first site, El Canchal del las Cabras Pintadas.

The first site we visited was El Canchal del las Cabras Pintadas. It is a major site and was mentioned by Ponz in 1778:

“walking towards the convent there is a place called the ‘painted goats’, because in the cliffs, which are perpendicular as a wall of houses with their corners and straight angles, certain figures are very poorly made by the same shepherds with red ocher, in which it seems that they were representing goats.”

This may be the first published reference to rock art in Spain. Breuil documented this site in 1918. The images are very faded. There are dark red goats and geometric forms together with some white painted elements and lots of graffiti.

Figure 4: Panel from El Canchal del las Cabras Pintadas.



Figure 5: DStretch LDS enhancement of Figure 4.





Figure 6: El Canchal del las Cabras Pintadas panel with white paint

As can be seen in Figures 5 and 7, DStretch worked very well on several of the panels.

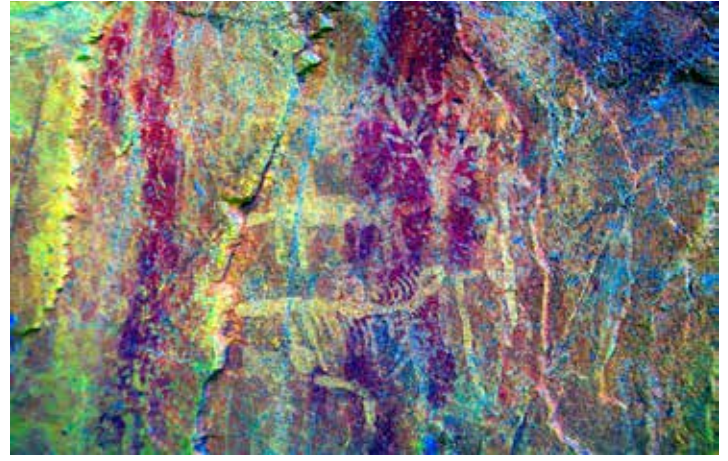


Figure 7:
DStretch LDS enhancement of Figure 6. In the center is a deer with huge antlers.

The New Discovery

After visiting some sites near Cabras Pintadas we hiked down to the Batuecas River for lunch. Maybe our lunch spot was the one described by the Abbé as recorded in (Brodrick, p89). Here is our Abbé in the Batuecas:

“Under the burning caress of a June sun the torrent was leaping and dashing its roaring cascades against the rocky bastions, onto the stepped Parapets of the savage gorge. From time to time, under a low vault of lentiscus and ilex, a basin of crystal waves revealed a bottom of variegated rockery.”

When he plunged into this inviting bath his muleteers thought

him crazy:

“In that natural bath I enjoyed the divine intoxication of the crystalline coolness and in my gambols I shot up spurts of water which fell in babbling cascades onto the clear mirror of the pool.”

After lunch came the surprise. In a place studied for a hundred years, Sheila found some new rock art! In the rugged cliffs above our lunch spot along the river Sheila found some paint streaks which were clearly finger stripes. There were several of these along the small angled rock faces in the cliff. Prof Bécarea was impressed with Sheila’s sharp eyes.

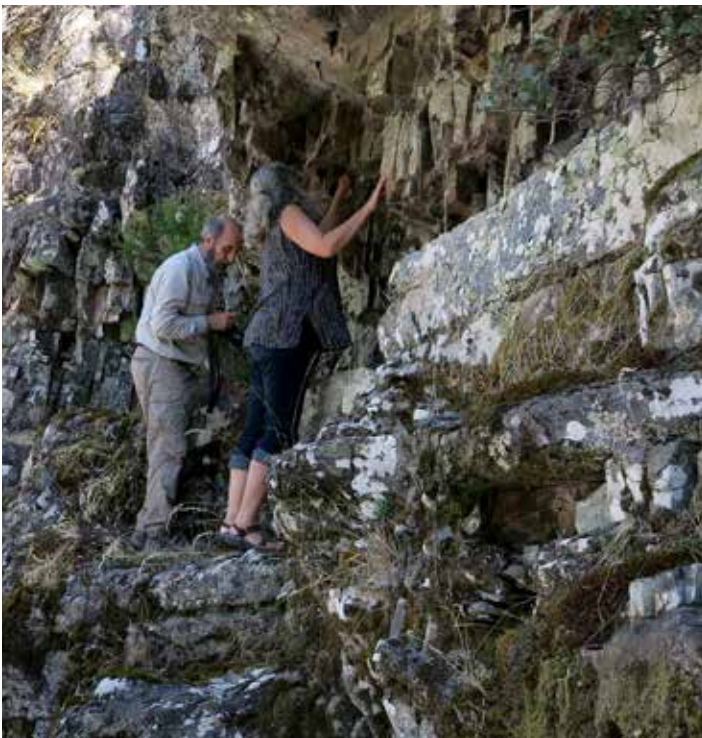


Figure 8: Sheila showing Professor Bécarea her new find.



Figure 9: Part of the new site. Note the red painted finger stripes.





Figure 10: Main panel at Canchal de la Umbria del Cristo.



Figure 11: Close up of main panel.

Figure 12: DStretch YRE enhancement showing the complicated red design

Canchal de la Umbria del Cristo

The last site we visited was an impressive site high up and overlooking the valley. Access was via a very steep and dangerous slope. Again this site was protected by iron bars, but Bécares had the key.

This site has a very unusual and complicated element painted in red over older designs (Figure 12). It is not present in Breuil's documentation of this rock shelter in 1918 (Figure 13). The predilection for painting on walls by Salamanca University students (Figure 1) hinted to me that students might be possible culprits. I have since learned that there is a Carmelite Monastery of cloistered secluded monks called the Discalced (one of several strict orders of Catholic friars or nuns who go barefoot or wear only sandals) Carmelites located along the river below the rock art. It was founded in 1599. Most likely someone from there painted the pictograph (according to ibericamagica.blogspot.com, Feb 2012). Breuil mentions that the monastery was in ruins when he visited. According to the monastery website (<https://monasteriodelasbatuecas.wordpress.com/>) it



was revived in 1950. It is tempting to speculate that monks new to the region and unaware of the history of the place might have done this vandalism sometime after 1950. To further complicate matters there is (what appears to me) Arabic writing in white on top of everything, see Figure 11.

Figure 13: Breuil's drawing of the panel.

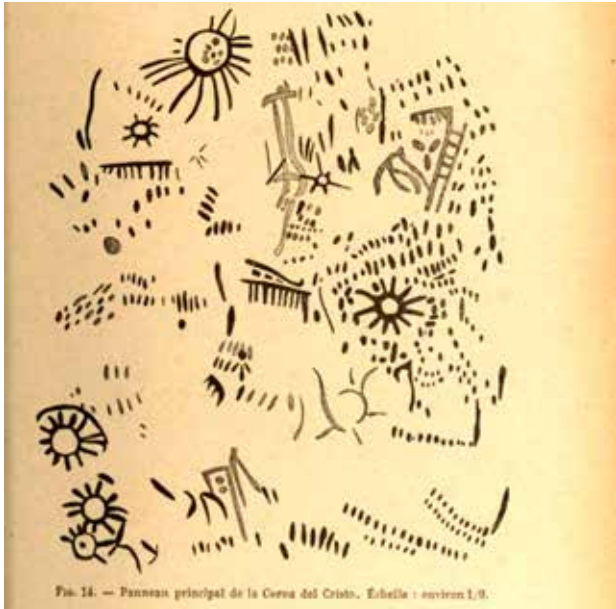


Figure 14: Upper part of panel enhanced using DStretch LDS



Figure 14 is a DStretch LDS enhancement that can be compared to Breuil's drawing. In general, from what can be seen now, Breuil's drawing is a faithful rendition.

An Experiment

Back at the river Professor Bécades found a piece of ocher similar to that used for some of the red paint.

He demonstrated how easy it was to powder it and add water to make a very striking red paint. He then painted a symbol onto a rock (Figure 15). It looked very good (Figure 16). Next he washed the



Figure 15

paint off (Figure 17). Some paint still could be seen in Figure 17, but DStretch was able to visualize (most of) the original design (Figure 18).



Figure 16

Figure 17

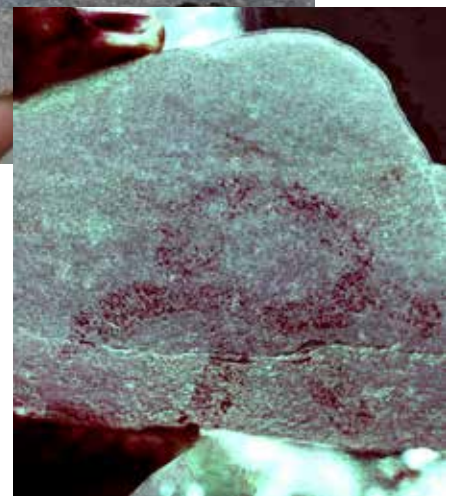


Figure 18

Acknowledgement: Thanks to Professor Julián Bécades of the University of Salamanca for his wonderful tour of Batuecas.

References:

- Bécades Pérez, Julián
La Pintura ruprestre esquemática en la provincia de Salamanca. In "Del Paleolítico a la Historia" p61-79 published by Museo de Salamanca, 1991
- Breuil, Henri
Les Peintures Rupestres de la Peninsule Iberique, L'Anthropologie pp 1-27 1918-19
- Brodrick, Alan Houghton
Father of Prehistory. The Abbe Henri Breuil: His Life and Times, 1963



Being Safe around Rattlesnakes

by Bill Drake, *Friends of Sierra Rock Art*

Like other members of FSRA, over the years, I have spent hundreds of hours in wilderness settings. The first time I saw a rattlesnake, which was at a petroglyph site in the high Sierra, I realized that I needed to know more about them in order to feel completely comfortable at remote settings. For the next year I did a considerable amount of research on the reptiles and then wrote an article about them for *Sierra Heritage* magazine. So others will feel more at ease hiking in areas snakes inhabit, this article will share some of what I learned.

Photo © Randy Babb



The Western Rattlesnake inhabits a large portion of the western U.S., including most of California. Its main subspecies in northern California is the Western Pacific Rattlesnake. In some parts of the Sierra, since they hibernate for the winter, they are most active in the spring when they come out of hibernation. The next most active time in the Sierra range is usually in the fall when they are seeking more food to build up fat for the next period of reclusion.

Where they are found has a lot to do with their body temperature. Temperature permitting, they can be found any time, day or night. During summer they tend to be especially active at night. During the day, a snake may be in the shade of a bush or rock, waiting for an unsuspecting rabbit, lizard, or other food source. On hot days they may rest in a mammal's hole or a shady spot. If the ground is cool, and the air temperature at ground level is between about 55 and 75 degrees, they may bask in the sun, sheltered from a cool breeze. Western Rattlesnakes like

shady bushes and rocky areas, such as ledges and outcroppings.

The most reassuring thing to know is that in our area, as a general rule, it is rare to see a rattlesnake and very rare to be bitten by one. Rattlesnakes almost always avoid contact with people by lying still or retreating. I have heard of one or two aggressive rattlesnakes in our region but they were rare exceptions. The only time a rattlesnake tried to chase after me was after I accidentally ran over it with my car on a dirt road near rock art sites in Bishop, California, and I stopped to see how it was doing. If threatened, they often coil and shake their rattles to warn intruders, although you can be bitten without hearing such a warn-

ing. And while snake bites can be very painful and severely damage your body tissue, they are almost never fatal. A California Dept. of Fish & Game website states that no venom is injected in about 25% of rattlesnake bites. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that only 5 people die from bites by all types of venomous snakes in the United States per year.

Many snake bites relate to bad behavior on the part of humans. In one Los Angeles County study, three-quarters of rattlesnake bites were in young adult males who had been drinking and teasing snakes. A poison information specialist at U.C. Davis Medical Cen-

ter has concluded, "The easiest way to get bitten by a rattlesnake is by being an idiot!"

Keep in mind that rattlesnakes, at top speed, can only crawl about as fast as a human being can walk. A rattlesnake can bite from any position, lying flat or coiled. They can also coil and strike in an instant. From a coiled position, however, they rarely strike more than one-half to three-quarters of their length and generally do not strike higher than one-and-one-half feet above the surface they are on.

Aside from idiotic behavior, bites most often occur when a person surprises a rattlesnake, causing it to react. This often happens when the person puts a hand or foot in an area they can not see. This can include, for example, stepping over a log or large rock without looking on the other side, or putting a hand on a ledge, or inside a woodpile at home, that is not or can not be inspected beforehand. Hikers walking past brush where a snake is resting or hiding can also startle a snake.

While snakes can feel ground vibrations, they do not appear

to respond to sound waves. Singing operas while hiking may scare other hikers away but will not affect snakes.

If you hear a rattler rattling, stand still until you can determine where it is. Move slowly out of the snake's range then get quickly away from the immediate area once you are sure there is not another rattler in the direction you will be going.

If you are bitten by a venomous snake, a companion should treat you for shock. Try to keep the affected area immobilized and below heart level. If a foot is involved, minimize its motion as much as possible. Get medical help as soon as you can. Call a hospital in advance so they can prepare for your visit. They will give you an anti-venom to counteract the poison. Walking or other activity by the victim increases the metabolic rate, which can cause the venom to spread and be absorbed much quicker. Excessive warmth also has this effect. If the victim must walk out, he/she should walk slowly and rest every five minutes. If you are more than a couple of hours from a hospital, you might use an extraction kit, which may suck out up to 30% of the venom if used right away. The longer one waits to use the kit the less ef-

fective it will be. The old suggestions to use a constriction band or tourniquet, to use a razor knife to make an incision at or near the bite, to suck out the poison with your mouth, to put ice on the wound, or to give alcohol or stimulants to the victim, are all very bad ideas. Do not give the victim aspirin which can make it harder for the blood to coagulate.

When hiking in the wilderness, it is recommended that you have one or more companions. You should also have a plan of action in the case of snakebite or another emergency. You should know where the nearest emergency facility is and what phone number to call for help. If you are several hours from medical help, carry a Sawyer's Extractor Pump snakebite kit and know how to use it.

Remember that rattlesnakes will try to avoid or warn you, their striking distance is not very long, and that you can easily out pace them. Be alert when you are hiking and always be aware of where you put your feet and hands. An often quoted rule of advice is that "the only dangerous rattlesnake is the one you don't see."

(originally written for FSRA News, 2014)



Fascinating Rock Art Site Near Flagstaff *by Chris Gralapp*

A terrific benefit of attending the annual American Rock Art Research Association conference is the chance to get out into the field in areas that are new to us, led by local experts. This year's meeting in Flagstaff (June 13 - 16) was an embarrassment of riches rock art-wise, with 25+ trips to choose from. The program itself is always eye-opening and informative, and the talks were especially in-depth this time.

I chose a strenuous trip, termed 'difficult' in the trip descriptor--I love a challenge, and it lived up to its billing. Responding to the title 'Little Colorado Tributary', I was reminded of my visit

to Chevelon Steps some years back, and was ready to see more of what I remember as very enigmatic and locally specific styles.

Our very knowledgeable guides, Connie and Chuck, led us into a canyon south of Winslow to visit some panels that they described as early Basketmaker II style. We encountered delightfully graffiti-free petroglyphs which were well preserved, and most likely a well-kept secret due to their remoteness. The imagery seems especially mystical with a very specific visual vocabulary. Here is a selection of images that I found engaging:



photos Frank Cox





Rock Art Studies Bibliographic Database

The Rock Art Studies Bibliographic Database is an open access, online resource that fulfills the need for a searchable portal into the world's rock art literature. Geared to the broadest interests of rock art researchers, students, cultural resource managers and the general public, the RAS database makes rock art literature accessible through a simple on-line search interface.

https://musnaz.org/search_rock_art_studies_db/

Search more than 40,000 citations to the world's rock art literature

- ☞ Includes books in and out of print, journals, conference proceedings, periodicals, gray literature, and ephemera.
- ☞ An ever increasing number of citations within the database include web links to online versions of the reference cited, and many citations include full authors' abstracts.
- ☞ The data can be sorted by any of the searchable fields.

A joint project of the Museum of Northern Arizona and the Bay Area Rock Art Research Association,
compiled by Leigh Marymor, 2019



Join/Renew your membership in the Bay Area Rock Art Research Association

Founded in 1983 by Dr. Paul Freeman and Leigh Marymor, BARARA attracts like-minded individuals who are committed to exploring rock art all over the world, preserving and conserving it, providing education, and studying rock art in creative and interesting ways. Members enjoy access to field trip information and receive a newsletter that is published twice a year. Dues are collected for the membership year which runs from January 1 through December 31.

First name (please print) _____

Last name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

E-mail address _____

Phone (with area code) _____

- Individual membership \$25 Donation (amount) \$ _____ thank you!
- Member-plus-one \$35

Make checks payable to: BARARA

Mail to: BARARA Membership
1400 Pinnacle Court, #405
Point Richmond, CA 94801

For additional information, contact
Amy Leska Marymor, Membership Chair
festuned@gmail.com