

## Notes and News

### DESERT KITES

These stone-walled enclosures in the Syrian desert have long been a puzzle, now at last solved. On a cairn excavated by Mr Lankester Harding many of the stones had inscriptions, and one had a drawing as well (PLATE III, A, and FIG. 1); the inscription is translated as follows: 'By MANI'AT, and he built for HANI'. And he drew a picture of the pen (or, enclosure) and the animals pasturing by themselves'. The site of the cairn is described as 'about 15 kilometres east of the gate of the I.P.C. station of H5, and about 50 metres north of the main Baghdad road, map reading approximately 360.185'. The excavation of the cairn was first described and fully illustrated in the *Ill. London News*, October 10th, 1953, pp. 564-5, and we wish to thank Mr R. S. Newall for calling our attention to it. By permission of Mr Harding, we reprint his account from Vol. II of the *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan*, edited by him, pp. 30-1.

'The drawing accompanying this text is one of the most interesting yet found, for it shows us one of the enclosures hitherto known as "desert kites" in use, thus answering the two main problems connected with these structures, viz. what was their use, and their date. Attention was first drawn to these in *ANTIQUITY*, Vol. 1, p. 202 and Pl. III, where a fairly accurate deduction as to their use was made by Flt. Lt. Maitland. The theme was further developed and illustrated by Group Capt. Rees in *ANTIQUITY*, Vol. III, pp. 395 ff. and Pls. III and IV. The most recent article is by Sir Alec Kirkbride in *JPOS*, Vol. XX, p. 1, and the present drawing shows that his is the most accurate suggestion.

On the left is the fortified enclosure in which a number of animals are already assembled: it has seven defensive embrasures in the walls and at the entrance the walls are turned inward to make escape of the animals more difficult. From the corners of the enclosure two long walls are shown extending; this is contrary to all known examples, where these long walls commence from the narrow entrance of the enclosure. The vertical strokes along these walls suggest that they were palisaded, and would account for the fact that they are always much lower than those of the actual enclosure. These palisades would presumably be made of branches of the desert trees and shrubs. On either side of the entrance, within the long walls, stands a man with arms upraised, directing the animals into the pen. At the mouth of the palisaded walls (which owing to the shape of the stone contract together instead of fanning out as they do in fact) are other animals being driven or stampeded towards the enclosure by a man with arms upraised. Outside the limit of the walls a few animals have succeeded in escaping and are making off in the opposite direction. The text commences here and continues over on the other face of the stone, where is another scene.

Here two quite different types of animals are depicted; the characteristics of one are a long tufted tail, a fairly long neck and small head, the ears being back. The other type has a long body, straight tail, a short neck and prick ears. There are three of each type. The former are being attacked by a man with a bow and arrow (or spear and shield?), while another with arms upraised seems to be trying to scare them off. The other three are all together in the right corner, and appear to be controlled by a man with a whip, or at least a long rope. They look almost as if they might be dogs. It is very difficult to guess at what the first group are supposed to represent: it is not the usual Safaitic

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way of depicting a lion (for which see no. 78), but what other animals of the neighbourhood have tufted tails? It would seem that these are the animals which are menacing the flocks and causing them to be driven into the enclosure, so it must be some beast of prey. Perhaps the dogs are helping to hunt them down.

This is the first extended composition by a Safaitic artist that we have seen, and certainly the first to depict an episode in which a building is involved, so that we have as yet no knowledge of their artistic conventions. Comparison with the plan of an actual

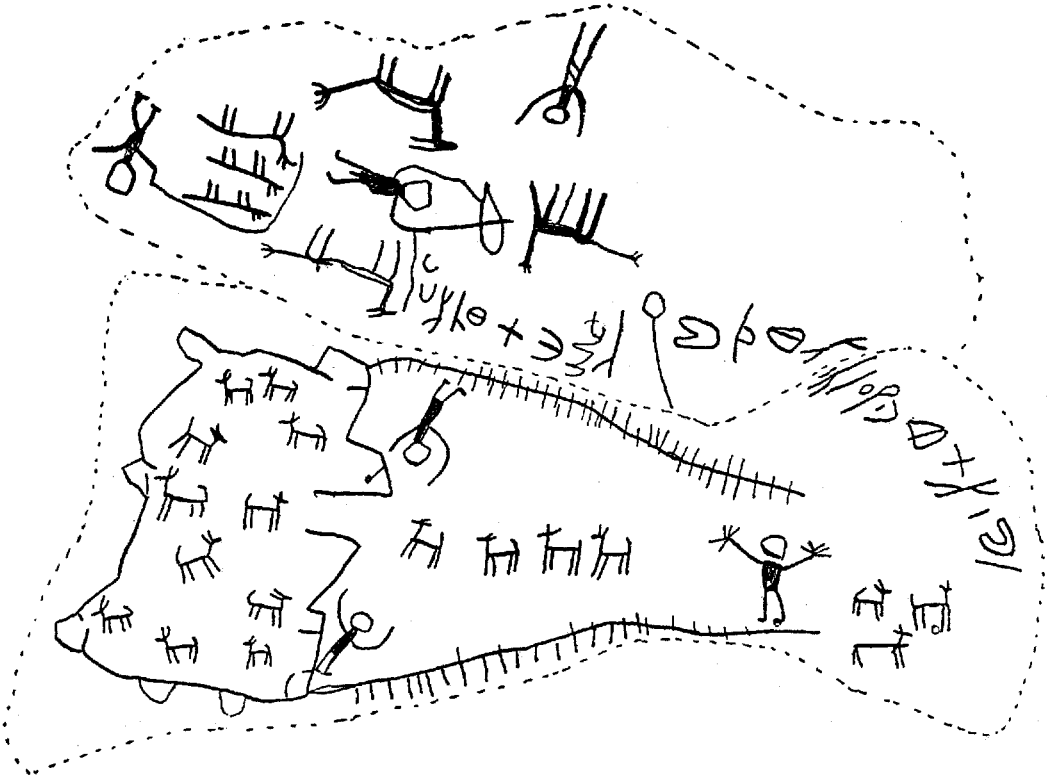


FIG. 1. EXPANDED COPY OF DRAWING OF 'KITE' (see PLATE III, A)

enclosure, Fig. 8 shows that apart from the variation mentioned above the drawing is a remarkably accurate representation. The other difference, the convergence of the long walls as against their fanning out in actual examples, is dictated by the shape of the stone on which the drawing is made.

It is, perhaps a little surprising to find that these grazing enclosures are a mere 1,500 or so years old, for they give the impression of much greater antiquity, but Rees (see above) put forward some arguments for a Roman date.

In the earlier part of this article Mr Harding says (p. 8) :—

'The building of cairns over graves is in itself of some interest, and Hasan Awad pointed out that it is a custom still practised among the Bedu. But a cairn is only built over those who are killed, never over those who die a natural death, and the stones of which it is built must be brought from some distance away; those in the immediate

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vicinity may not be used. Both these conditions are fulfilled in this case, as *Hani*' was apparently killed by an arrow, and the basalt stones and boulders which strew the desert surface still some right up to the cairn itself, a fact I had not appreciated until Hasan drew my attention to it. The reason for these customs is now forgotten, but probably has something to do with the placating of the disturbed spirit. It is also still the custom of passers-by to add a stone to the pile, as so many Safaites record doing.

Unfortunately nothing discovered in the course of excavation or in the texts themselves gives any satisfactory clue to the dating, though the Latin text No. 173 suggests a fairly early date, as Latin does not seem to have been used in Jordan after the 4th century A.D. But this particular text does not refer to *Hani*' by name, and might even be later than the burial. The last pilgrim to the cairn was a Polish soldier, who scratched his name on a block of basalt in 1943'.

### A REMARKABLE BOG-FIND (PLATES IV and V)

It is not often that one is able to look into the actual face of prehistoric man (PLATE V). In the summer of 1950 a corpse was found in Tollund Bog, about 10 kilometres west of Silkeborg in Jutland. It lay on the bottom of the bog, covered by 2.50 metres of peat. It was that of an adult male and was in an unusually good state of preservation, especially the head (PLATE IV). The internal organs too were intact, and their contents susceptible of examination.

On the head was a conical cap made of eight pieces of skin sewn together with the hairy side inwards, and tied under the chin with skin straps. Round the waist was a belt of an irregularly cut thong with an 'eye' in one end. The most remarkable feature about the body, however, was the well-plaited rope which, by means of a noose, was pulled so tightly round the man's neck that it had left grooves in the skin. The assumption is that the man was hanged by the rope.

The corpse cannot be dated either by the cap, the waist-belt or the rope. Nor is any clue provided by a preliminary analysis of pollen samples taken from round about the body. The relation of the cap to the skin cloaks mostly found on bog corpses, and the violent death by hanging nevertheless suggest that the Tollund body is yet another of a group of similar bog-corpses, now numbering about forty, that have been found, especially in northern Jutland. It seems plausible to assign them to the Early Iron Age, i.e. between the end of the Bronze Age and the year A.D. 400 approximately.

The foregoing is a summary, in English, printed at the end of Knud Thorvildsen's article, 'Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie', 1950, p. 310. On pp. 311-28 is a botanical study in Danish of the stomach contents by Hans Helbæk, and on pp. 329-41 the same in English. The man's last meal seems to have contained no meat, and to have consisted of some kind of gruel, with mainly barley, linseed, *Camelina* seeds and fruits of *Polygonum lapathifolium*.

We wish to thank Dr Ramskou and the authorities of the Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen, for their kindness in supplying the photographs from which Plates IV and V were made, and for giving a reference to the published account used above. The discovery was the subject of a television programme recently broadcast and reported (and criticized) in the *Times*, June 6th.

### THE KALAMBO FALLS PREHISTORIC SITE

A discovery likely to be of some importance in helping to determine the age, environment and ultimate development of the Chelles-Acheul Culture in Central Africa was made towards the end of last year at the Kalambo Falls on the Northern Rhodesia-Tanganyika