Tantalizing Tassili Tadrart
Rock Art along the edge of the Plateau of the Rivers, Algeria
- 10th largest country in the world
- Largest country in Africa
- Berbers are the indigenous inhabitants
Tassili n’Ajjer
Plateau of the Rivers

- First reported in 1910
- Dates beginning in the early Neolithic at the end of the last glacial period
- Savanna - Large wild animals including antelopes, crocodiles cattle herd and humans engaged in hunting and dancing.
- Designated as a World Heritage Site in 1986
- Much of the park is off limits
- Sandstone and sand
- Lowland Camps – Tadarat (rainy season)
Some styles of rock art were similar across the Sahara
As the climate grew more arid the style and subject matter of the rock art changed.

- Small # of absolute dates for rock art
- Researchers differ in their interpretations by style.

https://aars.fr/index.html
Climate Change

Figure 19.2. Semi-quantitative chart, roughly summing up the evolution of the average overall Saharan climates during the Holocene (excluding local variability).
Earliest examples of Saharan rock art are invariably engravings ~10,000-7,000 BCE

*Figure 19.2.* Semi-quantitative chart, roughly summarizing the evolution of the average overall Saharan climates during the Holocene (excluding local variability).
Bubalus or Large Wild Fauna Period

- Earliest examples of Saharan rock art are invariably engravings
- ~10,000-7,000 BCE
- Found over a large area of the Central Sahara
- Giraffes, elephants and now-extinct species of bovine, etc.
- That they were hunters is inferred from a lack of domestic animal representations.
- Fairly Naturalistic
- Later period – domesticated cattle & ovicaprids
Deeply engraved crouching gazelle 0.47 meters, with polished lines is typical of this style.
• Bubalus antiquus – appear 2.5 million years ago in Africa, became extinct about 12,000 years ago in Europe and 4000 years ago in North Africa.
• Monumental scale only found in this style
Atlas (Barbary) Lion
Photo from 1939 – Edward Pease

By Alfred Edward Pease (29 June 1857 – 27 April 1939) -
https://archive.org/stream/bookoflion1913alfr#page/112/mode/2up, Public Domain,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=12273815
The Oued in Djerane, Tadrart
The Oued in Djerane, Tadrart
Humans and animal-headed humans and less well executed
This peculiar style is limited to paintings in the Tassili and isn’t found in the rainy season camps. The exact dating of this period is also a matter of heated debate.
• Human and human-like figures express high degree of symbolism
• Animals depicted are still mainly the wild fauna
Figure 19.2. Semi-quantitative chart, roughly summing up the evolution of the average overall Saharan climates during the Holocene (excluding local variability).
Pastoralist (Neolithic)

- This period produced the most numerous prehistoric rock art sites, both engravings and paintings.
- Wild animal representations become scarce,
- Their place is taken over by innumerable representations of cattle, both solo and in herds, sometimes of over a hundred.
- Other scenes show people doing their daily activities, all in a very “artistic” and refined manner.
- Society was one of nomadic herders.
Lion Hunt, Tadrart
Dstretched Photo by Wilma Hutson
Scenes show people doing their daily activities, all in a very artistic and refined manner
Pastoralist Style Bovines super-imposed over small figure style family scene

Egypt
Introduction of domesticated animals correlates in many places to a rapid change from grassland to scrubland vegetation. After the drying of the climate the herders to move south.

Figure 19.2. Semi-quantitative chart, roughly summing up the evolution of the average overall Saharan climates during the Holocene (excluding local variability).
• The horse was introduced to the Sahara about 1,200 B.C.
• Horse drawn chariots used along the Saharan trade routes up until classical times
Stylized Anthropomorphs

- Heads which consist of a line
- Women – long elegant dresses
- Slight steatopygia
- Style stretches from southwest Libya to the Atlantic Coast
Homestead Scenes

Tadrart, Algeria
Show possible conflict
• Characterized by small hour glass shaped human figures.
Camel Period – final onset of arid period

*Figure 19.2. Semi-quantitative chart, roughly summing up the evolution of the average overall Saharan climates during the Holocene (excluding local variability).*
Camel period

- Began ~ 2000 BP when camels first appeared in the desert
- Final onset of aridity the camel replaced the horse as the beast of burden,
- Earlier images were beautifully executed but later ones drawn in a crude style
Camels replace the horse

Often the imagery is not as "artistically" executed.
Sometimes accompanied by the Tifnar script of the Tuaregs