TARA, the Trust for African Rock Art, was founded in 1996 by photographer David Coulson under the patronage of renowned archaeologist, Mary Leakey, and author/conservationist, Laurens van der Post.

Based in Nairobi, Kenya, TARA is committed to recording the rich rock art heritage on the entire African continent, to making this information widely available and accessible and, to the extent possible, safeguarding those sites most threatened by both humans and nature, no matter how remote.

TARA achieves this through survey and conservation work, documentation, exhibitions, publications and community projects. TARA has documented rock art in 16 African countries and digitised 10,000 images that are now available online. It is estimated that over one million people have visited TARA’s exhibitions in 12 countries. The organisation also works closely with communities in areas where rock art is found, in to in order to raise awareness of rock art as a fragile heritage resource, and to improve the lives of people in those communities.

The Trust for African Rock Art (TARA) is registered in the United States as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation. TARA is a member of the International Federation of Rock Art Organizations.
TARA has again enjoyed a productive and exciting year despite the financial challenges facing all of us. A major achievement was the completion of our Archive Project with Aluka/JSTOR. After several years of hard work, TARA’s Digital Image Centre/Archive is now one of the most experienced digitisation teams in Africa.

Following the successful community projects in Suba and Kakapel in Kenya, we have used this model to launch two new community rock art projects in East Africa. In June we signed an MoU with Tanzania’s Division of Antiquities as a basis for a new ‘Kondoa Community project’ which we began in July with support from EPA – Ecole du Patrimoine Africain (Benin). Kondoa is a UNESCO World Heritage Site in central Tanzania. In August we began a community rock art project in Lokori, Northern Kenya, funded by the US Embassy.

Our travelling exhibitions with the Alliance Française, ‘Window on Africa’s Past’, have completed tours of ten African countries, including Kenya. One set is now about to travel to Uganda and the other set has been sent to the Origins Centre in Johannesburg for an opening in January 2010. Meanwhile, our ‘Dawn of Imagination’ exhibition at the Nairobi Museum will soon be travelling to the National Museum of Tanzania in Dar es Salaam. The exhibition has been up for nearly two years, and has been enjoyed by several thousand visitors, including huge numbers of students. In August, the Getty Conservation Institute/Southern African Rock Art Project (SARAP) organised an Assessment and Planning Meeting at the Origins Centre in Johannesburg. TARA was ably represented at the meeting by Alec Campbell, Janette Deacon, George Abungu, Terry Little and myself.

Our major survey trip this year was to southwest Libya in October, where we recorded more remarkable Saharan sites in the Sahara, and documented one of the worst cases of rock art vandalism ever recorded. We are also planning a brief trip to Somaliland – with UNESCO and the Somaliland Division of Antiquities – towards the end of the year, or early 2010. Two important conservation and survey trips were made this year; the first to Morocco in May, and the second to Uganda in September. In Morocco we held meetings concerning a proposed Theft and Vandalism Conference, scheduled for 2010, while in Uganda we visited a major rock painting site, Nyero, which is seriously threatened by illegal granite mining.

TARA has continued to engage interns in various capacities where they have been able to make valuable contributions to TARA, while at the same time develop professionally. Mark O’Neill from Ireland, currently a Masters student in Museology at the Reinwardt Academy in Amsterdam, joined TARA in July 2009 for a four-month internship to work on community-based projects. In the same month, Pauline Swagi, a recent graduate of the University of Nairobi with a Bachelors Degree in Anthropology, joined in the outreach and community projects.

Joseph Weche and Geoffrey Ageng’o, who joined the organisation in 2008 as volunteers at the ‘Dawn of Imagination’ exhibition at the Nairobi National Museum, interned as Communications Assistant and Education Assistant, respectively. Emmanuel Nyange and Evan Maina, who have been interns since last year, were taken on as employees in July as Assistant Designer and Database Operator. Martin Sande, another volunteer at the Nairobi Museum exhibition, was hired in October as Assistant for Community Projects.

In June we bid farewell to Gladys Nyasuna-Wanga, our Programme Manager who followed her passion for communities to work with Liverpool Voluntary Counselling and Training. Gladys joined TARA as an intern in 2004 and her contribution to the organisation over the years has been invaluable. Gloria Borona, Projects Assistant since 2007, was promoted to Head of Marketing and Community Outreach and now holds the new position of Manager of Community Projects. In March, Gloria was selected to participate in a workshop on Heritage and Poverty Alleviation in São Tomé, organised in the framework of the Africa 2009 Programme. We are quite proud of Reuben Chelimo, Head of our Digital Image Centre/Archive, who was one of 22 professionals from 17 countries selected to participate in ICCROM’s course, SOIMA 2009 – Sound and Image Collections – in New Delhi, India. Edith Okama, working in the Archives since 2005, now has the added role of Merchandise Co-ordinator.

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The TARA exhibition ‘Windows on Africa’s Past’ was officially opened at Kisumu Museum in western Kenya on 23rd February, 2009 in its newly built gallery. This multi-media exhibition on Africa’s unique rock art heritage was originally launched in partnership with the Alliance Française in Nairobi and has travelled to nine other countries in Africa since early 2007, including Botswana, Djibouti, Eritrea, Madagascar, Namibia, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

Permanent Secretary, Dr Jacob Ole Miaron, represented the guest of honour, Hon William Ole Ntimama, Minister of State for National Heritage and Culture. Hundreds of Kisumu residents were joined by the French Ambassador, Madame Elisabeth Barbier, the National Museums of Kenya’s Director General, Dr Idle Farah, the Provincial Commissioner, Paul Olando, and the Kisumu Mayor, Sam Okello. TARA was represented by David Coulson and Terry Little. Many thanks to the staff of the Kisumu Museum for their collaboration during the six-month exhibition.

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Thanks to funding from EPA (School of African Heritage) in Benin, TARA has implemented a series of activities and products at its Nairobi Museum exhibition to enhance interactivity. These include studios for school groups, training for gallery attendants, an exhibition catalogue, and a students’ magazine.

The rock art studios are educational activities aimed at enhancing learning in an interactive manner. TARA and the National Museums of Kenya’s Education Department designed a concept for the studios during a workshop with local teachers. The 2-3 hour studios focus on two categories of students (6-9 year olds and 10-15 year olds), each with custom-designed activities, such as an exhibition tour, Wheel of Knowledge games, study sheets, drawing, painting and video screening. Hundreds of students have been engaged in these activities, resulting in the students’ magazine that contains rock art drawings and essays by the studio participants.
Based out of the capital city, Baku, I made three visits to Gobustan, accompanied by the Director of the Gobustan National Reserve, Dr Malahat Farajova. I was impressed by the diversity of the art as well as its apparent antiquity, and was requested to advise them on how best to promote and conserve these sites. Dr Farajova explained that some of the earliest engravings date back to 34,000 years, which would make these amongst the oldest rock engravings in the world. Some of the art reminded me of European Palaeolithic art (eg. aurochs, left), while other images reminded me strongly of North African engravings (eg. top). Not surprisingly, a lot of the art was similar to rock art in Turkey and Iran. During my visit, I gave a lecture at the Baku State University regarding TARA’s work in Africa, which touched on similarities between our art and theirs.

In my report to the Embassy following the trip, I recommended that they invite an international team of scientists/dating experts to establish and confirm the dates. If they are as old as is maintained, this could be of great benefit in raising the profile of Gobustan’s rock art.

Main Picture: Rock engravings of caprids (goat-antelopes) on a boulder at Gobustan World Heritage Site, Azerbaijan; Inset top: Human figures beneath a boat, Gobustan; Inset below: Auroch heads (prehistoric bovids) and a small equid facing left, Gobustan; Below: Engraving of stag with large antlers, Gobustan.

TARA is known throughout the world for its achievements in promoting and conserving African rock art. In May this year, at the invitation of the Azerbaijan Embassy in London and the Anglo-Azeri Society, TARA Chairman David Coulson visited the UNESCO World Heritage sites in Gobustan near the Caspian Sea, to share some of his knowledge. He recounts his visit here.
The D.I.C. continues to support TARA’s mission to be a permanent visual archive of Africa’s rock art. This year, it was able to complete TARA’s submission of just over 10,000 high-resolution images from 16 countries to Aluka/JSTOR. Researchers, scholars, students, and other interested people can now access the vast resources at www.aluka.org.

Apart from the continuing digitisation of slides, the D.I.C. is also undertaking digitisation of analogue video and audio recordings from various rock art expeditions, particularly from the Sahara. It will continue to migrate its recordings to the most appropriate archival formats to promote their long-term preservation. In September, the D.I.C. began uploading 100 rock art images to the TARA web site from Wadi Mathendous site in Libya, a site listed on the World Monument Fund’s 100 Most Endangered Sites in 2008.

Published by Rizzoli in October 2009, this book has 300 photos by renowned international photographers David Coulson (TARA Chairman), Nigel Pavit, Angela Fisher and Carol Beckwith. These stunning images of Lamu, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, are punctuated by authoritative text by heritage experts Lorna and George Abungu (TARA Board member). The book is an extraordinary portrait of Kenya’s remote island paradise – and its lifestyle, crafts, architecture, decorative arts, and traditions. TARA has been commissioned by JSTOR and Ithaka (see pg. 20) to digitise the book’s images for online access to professional users of Ithaka’s Aluka/JSTOR archives. Copies of this book are available internationally from major booksellers.

This year TARA produced three publications. The Dawn of Imagination catalogue, inspired by the current exhibition of the same name, highlights the beauty and magnificence of African rock art. I Love Rock Art is a colourful magazine aimed at engaging children in the appreciation and protection of rock art. Managing Community Projects: TARA and the Abasuba Community Peace Museum, is an exciting addition to TARA’s publications, and recounts our valuable experience of working with communities. These publications and many more are available at TARA’s Rock Art Shop at the Nairobi Museum, and soon at our online Gift Shop.
Over the past decade, the Chicago-based philanthropist, Ann Lurie (through the Ann and Robert H. Lurie Foundation) has been one of TARA’s staunchest and most generous supporters. Ann became interested in TARA’s work in 1999 on her first visit to Africa. Accompanied by TARA’s Treasurer and Founding Trustee, Tom Hill, she visited TARA’s community rock art project in Niger and the now-famous 7,000 year old Dabous Giraffe carvings, first recorded by TARA in 1997. On the same trip she also visited Cairo, Egypt, where she became intrigued with the work of Mark Lehner, whom she supports today through Ancient Egypt Research Associates, a US-based archaeological excavation at Giza.

On her first trip to East Africa, she also visited Maasailand near Mt Kilimanjaro and was asked to help build a nursery school. Once the school was underway, and on subsequent visits, Ann (a trained paediatric nurse) recognised that there were no health care services available to the population of these remote Maasai communities. To respond to this critical void, she launched a mobile clinic on Mbirikani Group Ranch within the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem. She purchased and outfitted an Airstream trailer retrofitted as a medical clinic, and with a staff comprised of a Kenyan doctor, nurse and medical technologist, they began traversing the area, providing basic medical services and gaining the trust of the residents. This was the genesis of AID (Africa Infectious Disease) Village Clinics (AVC) whose mission is to “Improve the health and quality of life for rural village communities in Africa by providing timely and accurate disease diagnosis, treatment, prevention and health care education”. Since inception in 2003, AVC has evolved into a 24-building fixed base compound with 124 health care workers, all Kenyan, including 8 physicians and 12 trained community health workers who travel by motorcycle to see patients who are too ill or live too far to come to the clinic. AVC serves a population of over 90,000 from an 80-mile catchment area and sees approximately 25,000 patients per year, with 2,500 HIV/AIDS patients currently on antiretroviral therapy.

During the same period, Ann funded the construction of 30 rural schools in Ethiopia in cooperation with Save the Children and ONE Love Africa. In addition to her work in Africa, Ann has been a major benefactor for biomedical and cancer research and cancer treatment in the USA. She provides significant financial support to both Northwestern University in Chicago and the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor where she received an Honorary Doctor of Laws in 2003. Her generous gifts have also enriched both the social services and the arts in Chicago. In early 2009, Ann received the 2009 Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter Award for Humanitarian Contributions to the Health of Humankind.

Ann’s support to TARA over the past decade has been absolutely critical to the growth and development of the Trust and, through it, the protection and promotion of one of Africa’s most valuable cultural assets. She has consistently given her support in the form of a non-designated gift, allowing the Board to decide how best to use her contribution within certain guidelines. “Those of us in the non-profit world…”, in the recent words of Chairman, David Coulson, “...know how essential and how precious benefactors like Ann Lurie are, giving the institution itself latitude to fund vital expenditures when no other source of funds exists. TARA would not be here today without Ann’s consistent support and belief in us.”

“When I was young, my mother encouraged me to “do a good deed daily.” Following her advice felt good then, and, now, many years later, it still feels good. I think of philanthropy as my selfish pleasure. What could be more rewarding than having the opportunity to give hope where none formerly existed, to feed the hungry, to help provide the tools to train doctors and scientists and ultimately save lives?” Ann Lurie
Horse art (sahara)
As far as we know, horses first arrived in Africa (Egypt) around 3,700 years ago and most ‘horse art’ is younger than 3,000 years old. Images of horses and of horse-drawn chariots are found right across north Africa from Libya to the Atlantic Ocean.
Chariot and charioteer pulled by two horses in Libya's Akakus Mountains, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
Four ‘flying horses’, two mounted, in Chad’s Ennedi Mountains.
Life-size painting of an equid (Zebra?) believed to date from the Round Head period of Saharan art, perhaps 8,000 years old.
Alec Campbell and I undertook a mission to Libya in October 2009. The objectives were to continue our survey and awareness work in southwestern Libya and to learn more about the condition of the Akakus rock art sites that were vandalised in February 2009. This trip was made possible through the support and cooperation of the Department of Antiquities (DOA) in Tripoli, the Italian Libyan Archaeological Mission in Akakus and Messak (central Sahara) and the World Monuments Fund through its Wilson Challenge Grant.

The trip began in Matkhandouch (a.k.a. Mathendous) in Messak Sattartef, one of Libya’s most important rock art sites where TARA laser-scanned the ‘Fighting Cats’ rock engraving in 2008. We recorded a number of engravings upstream of the principle site that we had not previously recorded and carefully noted the conservation status. After Matkhandouch, we visited another new and important site in the southwest Messak before crossing the Erg Uan Kasa Dunes to the Akakus and northwest to the ‘Libyan Tassili’. In the process, we recorded about 30 new sites.

One of the most spectacular sites we recorded in the Akakus Mountains was first recorded by Prof Mauro Cremaschi of the Italian Libyan Mission. The site contains both paintings (Round Head) and engravings. The most important panel is an arched, vertical slab of rock below a massive cliff on which five human figures with circular heads are carved in bas-relief technique, a style of engraving unique in our experience.

While in the Akakus area we met with the Head of the Italian Libyan Archaeological Mission, Dr Savino di Lernia, to discuss collaboration with both the Mission and the DOA. We talked about management plans for the Matkhandouch area and the importance of implementing plans for this whole region, including plans for a new Akakus National Park. Dr di Lernia also outlined the status of a rescue initiative for the recently vandalised paintings and engravings which we had managed to visit, one of which we had recorded in 2008 (see fig. 6). The extent and severity of the damages were shocking and Dr di Lernia seems to hold little hope of successfully repairing the damage.

On our visit to the Libyan Tassili we recorded a painting site in the Wadi Ahloun, only a few kilometres from the Algerian border. Here, in a little alcove some 20 metres above the Wadi, was a beautiful painting of a giraffe and its baby from the Pastoral Period, possibly dating to 7,000 years ago. This painting was first recorded by François Soleilhavoup and his team in 1998. (Fig. 3 below)
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Main Picture: Camping in the Sahara between Libya’s Messak Plateau and Akakus Mountains.

1. One of several exceptional figures carved in bas-relief below a cliff, maybe 10,000 years old, in Libya’s Akakus Mountains.
2. Landscape in the Southern Akakus Mountains, Libya.
3. Giraffe sitting with its baby, from the Pastoral Period of Saharan art in southwestern Libya, c. 7,000 years old.
4. View looking out of a painted cave in Libya’s Akakus Mountains, close to the Algerian border.
5. Black rhino at Ouan Regaya, southwestern Libya.
6. Painted shelter in the Akakus Mountains, recently vandalised (spray paint).
In February 2009, the Uganda Department of Museums and Monuments contacted TARA with information about threats to Nyero rock art site, a National Monument in Eastern Uganda, and to other neighbouring sites, ranging from granite mining and encroaching agricultural activities to graffiti and the smearing of oil for ritual purposes directly on the art. So in early September, David Coulson and TARA's Chief Operations Officer, Terry Little, undertook an emergency survey mission with staff from the Uganda museums: Rose Mwanja, Commissioner, Museums and Monuments and Jaqueline Nyiracyiza, Conservator of History/Archaeology.

The Nyero Rock Art site has a group of massive granite outcrops where exceptional geometric art, believed to be the work of Twa hunter-gatherers, is found. The Teso community are the current inhabitants of the region, having arrived with their livestock about 300 years ago. Nyero’s cultural value has long been recognised (gazetted in 1972 as a National Monument) and is inscribed on Uganda’s Tentative List for nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage List.

On arrival at Nyero, the group immediately noticed large piles of granite chips on the way to the site giving the impression that the group was arriving at a mine or quarry rather than a sacred (cultural) site. In addition to the piles of granite were lots of ugly (as well as dangerous), cavernous holes where the illegal ‘miners’ have dislodged and, using fire, broken up beautiful boulders that are then removed in pieces. These activities have seriously scarred the natural and the cultural landscape and destroyed large quantities of archaeological material – numerous decorated pottery sherds lay scattered around these holes. Similar scenes, and also graffiti, were evident at a number of other rock art sites in the area.

It was clear to the members of the survey team that a number of urgent actions are required to improve this situation – beginning with raising awareness of these sites as potential alternative sources of revenue for the local communities apart from granite mining. Also paramount are establishing site management plans, improving infrastructure (eg. demarcation, signage) and removing graffiti – all with a view to creating tourism products based on the rock art and the surrounding natural heritage.

Main picture: Ancient paintings superimposed by recent graffiti (below), located under a boulder at Ngora. In foreground, sections of granite have been hacked out and removed by miners; Inset: Piles of broken granite left by illegal miners, close to painted shelters at Nyero; Below: Detail of graffiti superimposing millennia-old Twa Paintings at Ngora rock art site near Nyero.
In September, Coulson and Little visited Morocco and were taken by Dr Abdellah Salih, Director of Culture, to visit two sites in the Draa Valley region, south of the Atlas mountains, in order to inspect recent conservation measures that had been implemented since Coulson’s last visit in 2006. The first site is a Lybico-Berber engraving site, Foum Chenna, where a Kasbah-style Welcome Centre had been built since the last visit. The Centre blends perfectly into the desert landscape, and is well-situated close to the entrance to Foum Chenna Gorge. The Centre will become a place where local artisans will be able to display and sell their crafts, as well as offer refreshments for visitors. The second site is Ait Ouazik, near Tazarine, where a similar reception centre was under construction. Custodians have been appointed and have started work at both of these important sites, which have been damaged and looted by vandals and thieves. In addition to being a survey and conservation trip, planning meetings were held with Dr Salih (who is also a member of TARA’s Advisory Board) concerning a proposed Theft and Vandalism conference, scheduled for 2010.

Main Picture: Visitors’ reception centre at Foum Chenna, Draa Valley; Inset right: Detail of a warrior on a horse with lance and shield. On left is an antelope (oryx?). Foum Chenna, Draa Valley; Inset left: Fragments of a rock with part of an engraved antelope (facing upwards), broken by thieves. Ait Ouazik, Draa Valley.
In Africa, and particularly in northern Africa, ancient paintings and engravings on stone are sometimes accompanied by kettles, cupules and depressions, although rarely by all three at the same site. Kettles are round, vertical holes, up to 50cm (20in) deep and 50cm wide, chipped and ground into flat surfaces. Sometimes kettles have a narrow channel leading across the rim, suggesting an overflow for liquids. Cupules are cup-shaped holes ground into horizontal, sloping and vertical surfaces, often placed next to or on top of engravings, and frequently ground into boulders that emit ringing tones when struck (rock gongs). Depressions are usually shallow and oval in shape, and invariably occur on horizontal surfaces, tops of boulders, shelter floors, narrow ledges on shelters walls and on sandstone pavements on the desert floor.

Cupules have been found worldwide. In India, sediment lying above cupules buried in a cave has been dated to hundreds of thousands of years ago, suggesting that some cupules have great age although most of them date from the last ten thousand years. Kettles often occur in groups in or next to shelters containing Round-Head style paintings. Using overlying sediments, two kettles in Libya have been dated to before 8,000 years ago. There are no certain dates for ground depressions, but they also tend to occur in areas with older art.

Although there has been much speculation, researchers have yet to determine meanings or purposes lying behind any of these holes ground into the rock. Fabrizio Mori, who dated the Libyan kettles, believes kettles were “used for symbolic and ritual purposes”. They could have been used to hold herbal liquids or even blood used in association with the paintings. Cupules are certainly symbolic and could reflect power added to engravings such as those of rhino, elephant, antelope and giraffe that may have been associated with practices such as rain-making. From Ethiopia to eastern South Africa, cupules are sometimes found in four parallel lines, similar to the bao board (called tsuro in Zimbabwe and marabaraba in Botswana), a game played with counters representing cattle and moved along the rows, capturing opponent’s animals. But was this a gaming board or did it have other and now hidden purposes?

There is in Rhino Cave, Botswana, a long, curved frieze of cupules and ground hollows that some researchers believe represents a snake used during Palaeolithic times by hunter-gatherers for ritual purposes. They suggest this to be the oldest evidence known of ancient, human, ritual behaviour. However, a neighbouring shelter has some 1,200 cupules laid out without any particular design that cover a single wall. While some cupules at both sites may be old, even dating to the Palaeolithic, others appear freshly made, suggesting that cupules have been steadily added to both friezes over thousands of years. And oval depressions, what were they used for? Researchers suggest for grinding herbs, grain, bone or even stones such as ochre, limonite or specular haematite used as pigments. The very positions of these depressions, often in clusters, and on boulders, open-air pavements and narrow ledges within shelters suggest that whatever was ground was special in some way, ritually processed and not just foodstuffs. Were kettles used in conjunction with Round Head art; do cupules add power to engraved images and rock gongs; and were depressions used for ritual grinding? Researchers are seeking answers, but we may never know what lay behind these human alterations to the rock.

Top left: Millennia-old cupules and a lower grindstone outside a painted shelter in Libya’s Akakus mountains; Middle: Large cupules carved into granite on Uganda’s Lolui Island, Lake Victoria; Top right: Tuareg man inspecting a large rock kettle in Algeria, perhaps 8,000 years old or more; Middle: Multiple cupules in Cameroon, West Africa; Bottom: Two men playing bao game in Ethiopia using cupules carved in the rock.
During the past two years, TARA has strengthened its work with communities living near rock art sites. These projects aim at achieving four interrelated objectives: increasing awareness within the local communities; conservation of the sites; development of basic infrastructure; and promoting the sites for local and international tourism. The overall aim is to improve the quality of life of the communities.

**KONDOA – TANZANIA**

The Kondoa Community Rock Art Project was launched in August 2009 through a series of workshops conducted by TARA, together with the Division of Antiquities in Tanzania. The workshops targeted community members from three of the rock art sites: Kolo, Pahi and Mnenia. The workshops, aimed at creating awareness on the importance of the Kondoa rock art, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, as well as to get feedback on a proposed community project in the region, were attended by 75 community members and culminated in a half-day ‘summit’ attended by community-selected representatives. In all the workshops the communities showed a lot of enthusiasm and exhibited high levels of awareness of exactly how they can be involved in site management, a critical ingredient for the success of any community heritage project. The rock art sites of Kondoa are very much alive, as the communities still use them for prayers, rituals and ceremonies. Borrowing from the TARA approach of ‘engaging’ participants rather than lecturing, the workshops were a forum for both facilitators and participants to learn, compare and share experiences. Site visits on each of the workshop days enhanced the whole experience.

One highlight was the presentation of a revised National Antiquities Policy that seeks to integrate the communities in site management in a mutually beneficial way. We worked together with a technical team from National Museums of Kenya, the National Museums of Tanzania and the Tanzanian Division of Antiquities. Based on its experiences, TARA, with the Division of Antiquities, will implement a project that will see the community members, who are the primary stakeholders, benefit from their heritage, thus enhancing the long-term conservation of Kondoa’s valuable rock art.

**SUNDA – KENYA**

After the official opening of the Abasuba Community Peace Museum in October 2008, TARA handed over its management to the Museum Board, which is composed of community representatives from the larger Suba District. TARA, working with the Board, has been closely following the activities of the museum to ensure the sustainable growth of the institution and its activities. The museum is run on a daily basis by Jack Obonyo, the founder and Curator, assisted by three employees from Mfangano Island. Since its opening, the museum has welcomed hundreds of visitors from Kenya and around the world. The Museum’s Community Centre has been instrumental in enhancing sustainability; it incorporates a seminar room and a culturally-themed restaurant, and is now the venue of choice for community activities on the Island.

The museum management has devised several income-generation schemes that have helped to sustain their day-to-day operations. The purchase of a generator, large monitor and cable TV subscription has enabled them to screen various entertainment programmes to the community at a fee. A longer-term strategy has been to utilise income generated from museum and rock art site entry fees, as well as from other activities, to purchase adjoining land that will in turn be used for the construction of cabins to offer mid-range accommodation for visitors. The museum is working in partnership with schools in the region on educational programmes to promote the Abasuba heritage, and it continues to work with its Advisory Board and the National Museums of Kenya towards the development of its public programmes.
The main activity in Kakapel this year has been the construction of the Kakapel Community Cultural Centre. The Centre is now complete and constitutes an open stage where the community can showcase their cultural products, including performances. Adjoining rooms serve as an office, storage space and kitchen. Since the project’s inception, the community has packaged their cultural products, such as the Anyun dancers and the Agonget Kemuseum Women’s Group, which specialises in preparing traditional foods to sell to visitors. The community has also formed the Kakapel Monument Community Stakeholders’ Committee, whose main objective is to ensure conservation of the rock art and other heritage in Teso District. The Committee, with a strong membership and leadership, has demonstrated a proactive approach to management of their heritage through liaison with various stakeholders such as the Department of Culture and other locally-driven initiatives; they have, for example, engaged in intensive tree planting and the development of site amenities. The Cultural Centre is managed by the Stakeholders’ Committee on behalf of the local community.

In July, 2009 TARA received a grant from the US Embassy State Department to implement a one-year project that will serve as a catalyst for the long-term preservation of the rock art in Lokori. In August, TARA held a stakeholders’ meeting in Lokori to get the community’s views on the proposed project and to discuss project implementation; it was agreed that the project be implemented with a local community-based organisation, LWUA – Lotubae Water Users Association.

In partnership with the National Museums of Kenya, TARA will implement an educational outreach programme that will encourage students in the region to take an interest in Palaeontology and Anthropology as a career opportunity. This project is based on the rationale that despite 40 years of research in the Turkana Basin, not a single scholar in these fields comes from the Turkana or neighbouring communities.
Branded merchandise is a novel way to raise awareness of African rock art and TARA’s work, as well as a creative way to generate income. With this in mind, TARA has continued to develop a strong brand by devising unique merchandise that retails through its Gift Shop at the Nairobi National Museum. TARA works closely with young designers to create unique and artistically inspired rock art-themed products, and our portfolio has grown to 35 products this year, including exciting items such as adult and children’s t-shirts, plates, mugs, greeting cards, kikoys (sarongs), posters, and postcards. Due to growing demand, additional retail outlets in Nairobi include Blue Rhino and Banana Box in Westlands, African Heritage Design Company Gallery at the Carnivore, and the gift shop at the Fairmont Norfolk Hotel in the city centre. As we expand our range of products, we also hope to expand access and distribution, making items available at our Online Gift Shop, and in museums across Africa.
At the end of 2008 TARA and the NMK renewed a five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to survey and conserve rock art sites in Kenya, create awareness about sites, and develop responsible tourism as a way of ensuring their long-term preservation. Current collaborations include the Lokori Rock Art project, which combines research, conservation and public awareness. The Education Department has also been an invaluable partner in the animation of the ‘Dawn of Imagination’ exhibition.

In June 2009, TARA and the Division of Antiquities of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism of Tanzania (through its Director, Donatius Kamamba) entered into a three-year MoU to survey and promote conservation and awareness of rock art sites in Tanzania, and develop rock art tourism. Within the framework of this collaboration, the organisations launched a community project at Kondoa (see pg. 17).

Among TARA’s most dynamic partnerships is that with EPA (School for African Heritage), based in Porto Novo, Benin. EPA is an institution specialised in the preservation and promotion of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Following the successful collaboration in an international workshop ‘Innovative Museum Marketing’ held at the Abasuba Community Peace Museum in 2008, TARA received a grant from EPA’s ‘Museums in the Service of Development’ (Msd) programme for its project: ‘Animating the Rock Art Exhibition at Nairobi National Museum’. The project, which got underway on 30th January 2009, has an overall aim to increase the interactivity of TARA’s ‘Dawn of Imagination’ exhibition through activities with the visiting public, as well as through schools and other learning institutions. The Suba workshop also inspired EPA to make a generous contribution towards a major TARA publication: Managing Community Projects: TARA and the Abasuba Community Peace Museum. This publication examines some of the critical ingredients for planning and implementing successful community projects in the heritage field – a theme that EPA is actively pursuing for its activities in Francophone Africa.

TARA’s Programme Manager, Gladys Nyasuna-Wanga, attended an EPA workshop in Saō Tomé in January 2009. The workshop, ‘Museum activities and marketing’, was an excellent opportunity for Gladys to interact with other heritage professionals and share ideas on how to improve marketing activities at TARA. EPA’s support was further evidenced through their funding for a series of community workshops in August at Kondoa, Tanzania, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The workshops were organised by TARA and the Division of Antiquities (DOA) in Tanzania. In October 2009, TARA collaborated in yet another international workshop for Francophone African heritage professionals organised by EPA and held in Nairobi: ‘Opportunités pour nos musées’. The workshop participants (10 from 6 countries) had an opportunity to explore TARA’s exhibition at the Nairobi Museum, and to learn from TARA’s effective and innovative marketing and communication strategies. The workshop served to strengthen the ties between the two pan-African heritage organisations, whose collaborations over the years have yielded increased mutual benefit. After an immensely successful 11 years, EPA’s Founding Director, Alain Godonou, joins UNESCO as Director of the Division of Cultural Objects and Intangible Heritage in 2010. TARA wishes him much success in his new and challenging position.

TARA has continuing strong ties with Aluka which, in 2008, became part of JSTOR. In 2009, JSTOR merged with Ithaka, with a mission to help the academic community use digital technologies to preserve the scholarly record and to advance research and teaching. Over 10,000 of TARA’s images are available at www.aluka.org and TARA has been commissioned by Ithaka to digitise the images from Lamu: Kenya’s Enchanted Island.

Another key partner is UNESCO, whose World Heritage Centre signed an MoU with TARA in September 2008. Survey work in Somaliland had been planned for late 2009 through the UNESCO Nairobi office, and Ms Sada Mire, Director General of the Department of Antiquities of Somaliland, will be a strategic partner in carrying out this work. Ms Mire visited TARA in July this year.

From left: Franck Houndígla, Reuben Chelimo, Franck Pacere, Gloria Borona, Alain Godonou, Terry Little, Sharon Kyungu, Geoffrey Mburu, David Coulson.
We would like to extend special gratitude to our 2009 funding partners who supported us in a period when many businesses and organisations were suffering. TARA was also affected by the financial downturn, reducing salaries by 20% for four months to sustain our operations.

We are especially grateful to the Arcadia Fund, which increased its support through a new grant benefiting the Digital Image Centre/Archives. Arcadia also supports our survey work, communications and general operations.

The Robert H. and Ann Lurie Foundation has continued to contribute generously to TARA in 2009 (see feature about Ann Lurie on page 5).

Benin-based EPA (Ecole du Patrimoine Africain) provided funding for the animation of the ‘Dawn of Imagination’ exhibition at the Nairobi National Museum, a community workshop in Kondoa, Tanzania and a publication about TARA’s work with the Abasuba Community Peace Museum.

We are grateful to the United States Embassy, through the Ambassador’s Cultural Fund, which is generously supporting a new community rock art project in Lokori, Kenya.

TARA enjoys a partnership with UNESCO, primarily through its World Heritage Centre, and the Nairobi Office of UNESCO is funding TARA’s upcoming survey mission to Somaliland.

TARA has benefited from the support of the Safaricom Foundation (Kenya) for its community projects in Kakapel and Suba District, Kenya. The Prince Claus Fund of the Netherlands is supporting the protection of the Dabous Rock Art site in Niger through its Cultural Emergency Response (CER) programme; while the World Monuments Fund, through its Wilson Challenge Grant, supports TARA activities related to the Mathendous Rock Art site in Libya, a site on the Fund’s 2008 ‘List of Most Endangered sites’. TARA is also grateful for the continued support of Aluka/JSTOR (Ithaka) in its continuing archive project.

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