Egyptian rock-art recording has been accomplished by both “amateurs” and “professionals”, from the early twentieth century to the present. Publication has often been partial, and varying in standard, with no set format for site designation or recording; important areas, such as that south of Wadi Baramiya, remain unrecorded beyond reconnoitring expeditions. Despite the location of much rock-art in areas perceived as remote, petroglyph sites are still often vulnerable. Sites along the major Nile-Red Sea routes are especially open to graffiti, quarrying and vandalism. Not only mining operations endanger off-road rock-art sites; treasure hunters may use sophisticated equipment, and this had become an increasing problem even before the January 2011 revolution. In recent years, different expeditions have demonstrated the potential of desert rock-art sites to contribute new evidence on key questions in Egyptian archaeology. However, threats to preservation and the lack of comprehensive archival resources present acute and increasing challenges.

Introduction

The rock-art of Egypt has hitherto not been as well known as that in wider Saharan North Africa. However, the territory of the country is home to a great number of significant images which date from the Palaeolithic through the Predynastic and Pharaonic periods into the Middle Ages and beyond. They occur both in the Nile Valley in the vicinity of settlements; and also deep in what are now the Eastern and Western deserts and at the Kharga, Dakhla and Farafra oases. The images constitute evidence for the activities of ancient Egyptians not only in proximity to the river, but point to hunting, mining, quarrying and also ritual activity far away from the comfort and safety of the valley. Due to expanding settlement and economic activity, especially mining and quarrying, and tourism the rock-art sites are increasingly under threat and a number have already been destroyed. Indeed, destruction of rock-art in Egypt has been going on for a long time. Quarrying around Wadi Abu Agag in the vicinity of Aswan destroyed images in 1912, with further damage in the same area occurring thirty...