



**PRESERVING LADAKH'S ENDANGERED ROCK ART
2 DAY WORKSHOP ORGANISED BY
INTACH LADAKH CHAPTER**

21 – 22 JULY 2012

VENUE: INTACH LADAKH CHAPTER, OPPOSITE J&K BANK, LEH

This workshop, focusing on the conservation of the rock art patrimony of Ladakh, was a joint initiative of TEDAHL and Tara Sharma (INTACH Ladakh Chapter). The event was addressed to local cultural and trekking guides as well as others who have an interest in promoting and protecting rock art sites. The organizers deliberately decided to keep academic aspects and debate aside and to focus on local potential interactions.

The first day of the workshop was held on July 21st at the Leh INTACH office while the second day was conceived as a full day tour of key rock art sites along the Indus. The workshop was driven by Martin Vernier.

About 25 people gathered at the INTACH's office for the opening of the event. The audience included guides sent by their travel agency or present on their own initiative, two renowned representatives of the Buddhist clergy and other persons personally or professionally interested by the topic. After a short welcome speech by Tara Sharma, an introductory presentation, summing up the main issues related to rock art, was made by Thupstan Norboo from J&K

Academy and executive board member of INTACH Ladakh Chapter. Then Martin Vernier presented the various types of rock art and their chronology, emphasizing rock art significance in understanding Ladakh's pre-Buddhist history.



M. Vernier (left) presenting a chronology a Ladakh's rock art (seated on the right end of the table: Tara Sharma, INTACH's Leh chapter coordinator), INTACH, Leh, 21st of July 2012.



The session was followed by an open discussion that gave place to interesting exchanges of point of views, interrogations and personal experiences. Individuals also took the opportunity to present specific endangered rock art sites in their villages or surroundings and appealed for support and practical assistance.

For the second day of the workshop, the participants, joined at the last minute by Rob Linrothe (a well-known American art historian), all embarked on a bus.

They first stopped at Stakna's bridge: a rock art site badly damaged by private initiative in 2011 and further threatened by a road-widening project. During the site's visit, as the group was realizing the scale of the damages and the irremediable loss of some key carvings -among which an animal style predation scene dated from the Iron Age- a member of the elected representatives of Stakna village joined the group. He pertinently presented some of the village priorities and realities alongside the problematic conservation of rock art. A lively discussion took place following which the Stakna villager joined the group for the rest of the day. An initiative very warmly received by the organizers and perceived as a promising step towards future possible dialogues and exchanges on the difficult issue of rock art conservation at the local level.



Discussion at the rock art site of Stakna, 22nd July 2012

The next stop was at the “Trishul Petroglyph Park” within Karu military complex, one of the best places to discuss the various possibilities and past attempts to protect rock art patrimony and their possible side effects.

The bus then drove to Karu village community house, where women of the local village association had prepared meal and tea.

The second half of the day tour took the group to Changa Thang, an important rock art site at both quantitative and qualitative level and almost untouched by human activities.

After touring the site and discussing the various challenges linked to its future, the whole group took the time to sit under the shadow of a tree for an informal and open concluding talk. Several individual thoughts and proposals came out, most of them highlighting the dominant role of local village communities for the preservation of rock art, lacking support from the local authorities until now. During this final debate leaflets in Ladakhi and English jointly conceived and printed by the organizers to promote the protection of Rock Art in Ladakh were handed out to the participants. These flyers are for free distribution and can be downloaded [here](#). The organizers hope to hold similar events in the future to promote the urgent protection of the rock art patrimony of Ladakh.



Discussion after discovering the rock art site of Changa, 22nd of July 2012.

Report and photographs: M.Vernier, Summer 2012.