

Neolithic Rock Art

at Latmos

www.paleolithic-neolithic.com



Introduction Rock Art

Prehistoric rock art is wider spread than we can imagine. It is found at all places where neolithic clans used to live. But it is surprising that still today we find new sites where our ancestors left their ritual traces with painted or engraved images. As writing was invented much later, this was their way of expressing themselves. We are fortunate to have these messages, but still do not understand them in detail.

Highly Developed

This shows us that our ancestors were neither primitive nor mentally underdeveloped. They possessed since long a fully developed brain which enabled them to speak articulately already more than 50,000 years ago. Further they could perfectly paint from memory very realistic looking animals in dark caves. And they were experts in creating the first musical instruments such as flutes and compose won-



derful sounding music that early already.

Latmos Mountain

Such prehistoric sites normally are regarded by local people as holy places and therefore not communicated. Or it is the lack of knowledge of their scientific value and therefore get disregarded. Some lie in very isolated and difficult to reach places mostly in mountain areas. Such a case is the Latmos Mountain region.

Ritual Sites

The mountain range today called Besparmak lies in the coastal area on the west coast of Turkey along the Aegean coast line. The neolithic rock paintings have been discovered and first documented only in 1994. Finally, over 170 sites were recorded around the mountain top. Their creators choose especially small caves and rock overhangs to paint their images on rock surfaces.

Age of Images

Their age has been at first estimated at about 12,000 before present times. But later research established an age of about 8,000 years. That is not very old for neolithic rock art. Therefore, the images are rather simple and resemble more human stick figures.

Latmos Culture

Because these images are not comparable with those at any other prehistoric rock art sites in the region or elsewhere archaeologists regarded it as a separate culture. So, the name Latmos Culture was created. In our opinion it needs more archaeological substance to call



it a culture.

Greater Cult Area

Experts assume that the Latmos Mountains were a larger cult site area, because the mountain was regarded as the home of an important prehistoric weather and rain god.

Important Human Motifs

Interestingly only human depictions were created here. That is really unique for neolithic rock art sites. Over 500 human figures have been documented so far. But these human images have not been shown in hunting scenes with animals as was typical for the neolithic period. But these figures were painted alone and in groups of up to 40 persons.

Male & Female Pairs

Seldom single figures were depicted, but mostly pairs were shown or smaller groups. Unique at Latmos is also the fact that pairs

are always painted as man and woman together. And across all sites the number between men and women is equal.

Defined Differences

As usual there is a clear difference between male and female depictions. Men were created in frontal pose and women in profile showing their huge bottoms and hips. In addition, female images were painted with more care. This might have a special purpose we will explain later on.

Abstract Depictions

The human images at Latmos are different too compared to other sites. They are rather small in format more abstract and stick figure like. From other sites we know how to date these.

Naturalistic vs Simple Images

If you are looking at neolithic rock art for the first time you might assume the more primitive those images are the older they might be. But





the opposite is true. The first images in human history were surprisingly detailed and naturalistic. This is true for all sites worldwide. Only later images lost skill and degraded to stick figure paintings or engravings.

Special Location

At Latmos the images were created in small caves and under rock overhangs the so-called abris. Noticeable is that they were placed close to water sources such as springs and small creeks. In one case even directly over a spring.

Important Fertility Cult

That indicated that the people coming to Latmos practiced a fertility cult. The images of many male and female pairs and the over emphasized female hips and bottoms support the fertility theory.

Cave Sanctuaries

The important Goeltepe and Karadere caves certainly were sanctuaries to adorn the rain and fertility god or goddess. At some rock overhangs dancing pairs can be seen.

Karedere Cave

One painted rock panel in the Karedere cave measures one by half a meter in size. It shows eleven painted figures plus a another in a side niche. The bodies are longer than their legs. Which is typical for Latmos.

Possible Headdress

The simple human figures here are not depicted with a round head, but instead just with a horizontal line often with two down pointing ends. This abstract headdress is present as well at other sites in the Near East. We know that human images did not represent specific persons. But they indicated a ritual happening and image of an important ceremony.

Goeltepe Cave

In the Goeltepe cave the figures are different in style. They are still primitive motifs, but they were painted with rounded bodies. This for example could be explained by another clan arriving from a different area to practice their rituals at Latmos. Or the paintings have been created somewhat earlier in time.

Different Motifs

Geometric motifs with zigzack lines and similar ornaments do not surprise us. There are many interpretations possible like rain, running water or lightnings in connection with the rain and weather god or goddess being adorned at Latmos.

Rare Hand & Foot Prints

Hand and foot prints typical for neolithic times are rather rare here. But they would fit perfectly





to the human depictions at Latmos. The reason for their lack of use can not be explained by experts. Did the neolithic painters not want to raise the anger of gods by leaving their personal prints on holy sites?

Few Animal Images

Only seven animal images have been found. As they are rather faded, they are difficult to recognize and opinions stretch from dog to cattle. This could indicate the transmission from hunter gatherer activities to sedentary shepherds and early farmers.

Other Finds

The discoveries of chalcolithic pottery and stone tools plus silex artefacts and obsidian support this theory. Therefore, experts assumed at first the rock paintings were 12,000 years old.

Used Colors

All images were created with red colors and painted with fingers or brushes. Only a single



picture was done in yellow and two in white. The red color was produced from crushed and pulverized local iron oxide. Unfortunately, most depictions have over time faded and are difficult to recognize.

Latmos Sites

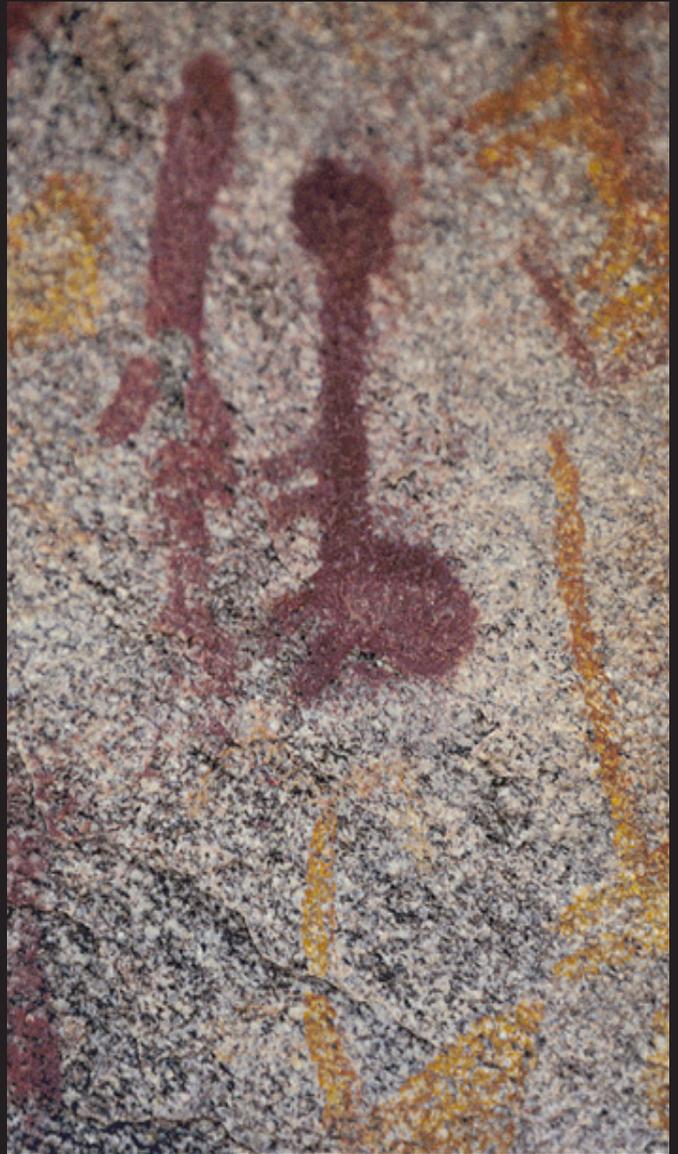
The most known sites at Latmos are: Baliktas, Daracik, Ikizada, Kavaklidere, Kavalan, Kovanalan and the rock overhangs Damliyurt, Kerdemelik and Sögütdere.

Summery

The Latmos images are unique for the neolithic period and are therefore worth seeing. Unfortunately, they are not well preserved. The reason for this might be the lack of knowledge of color production and mixing with adhesives to fix them well and preserve them over longer times on the local rock types.

In addition, the difficult weather condition based on the coastal winds might have done some damage too.





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