

## THE BANGUDAE WHALES IN THE CONTEXT OF WORLD ROCK ART

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One of the most striking features of the remarkable Bangudae site in South Korea (Lee 2002, 2004, 2011) is the depiction of whales, a feature highlighted by the shape chosen for the museum building close to the rock art. Cetaceans—whales, as well as porpoises and dolphins—are not a common species in world rock art, and their presence is markedly patchy—for example, despite their prominence in Bangudae, not a single cetacean has yet been found in the rock art of China (Zhang, pers. comm.). As we shall see below, some coasts abound in images of whales, while on other coasts very few or none are known. Naturally, this preliminary survey does not aspire to being exhaustive, but nevertheless I hope it will serve to place the Bangudae whales into a global context while assessing the frequency of similar depictions in a wide variety of ancient cultures. I have not included any speculations as to the age of the rock art concerned, primarily because in the vast majority of cases there is little solid evidence to ascribe a date to the images. Similarly, no measurements are provided in most cases, as these too are usually absent from the literature.

### **Early Prehistory**

The earliest known depictions of whales occur in the Upper Palaeolithic art of Spain and France. The best known are two late Ice Age (Magdalenian) portable images. The first, from Arancou in the French Pyrenees, is an engraving of a whale and a stag on a bone pendant (Roussot 1995/6); the other, from Las Caldas in Asturias, is an engraving of a whale which is actually on a cachalot tooth (Polledo 2011: 101) (fig. 1). One assumes that the creatures must have occasionally been seen beached on shore—Arancou was only 40 km from the sea at that time.

They were also presumably seen offshore in the sea. The perforated antler baton from Montgaudier, discovered in 1885, is famous for its beauti-



Fig. 1. The Whale Figure from Las Caldas (Photo: Museo Arqueológico de Asturias)

ful depictions of grey seals and serpentiforms; but between them are three strange arched figures. Robineau (1984) has interpreted these 2 cm-long motifs as baleen-whales, with their heads to the left, but this idea seems somewhat tenuous, to say the least.

Only one fairly definite parietal depiction is known in Upper Palaeolithic art—a 2-metre engraved whale in the northern Spanish cave of Tito Bustillo (Millara & Angulo 2010: 60; Polledo 2011: 101) (fig. 2). In the southern Spanish cave of Nerja, some motifs are commonly interpreted as either seals or dolphins, but they are so vague that it is difficult to be sure (Dams 1987: 17; 1987a: 219-23; Sanchidrián 1994: 133-35, 184-93).

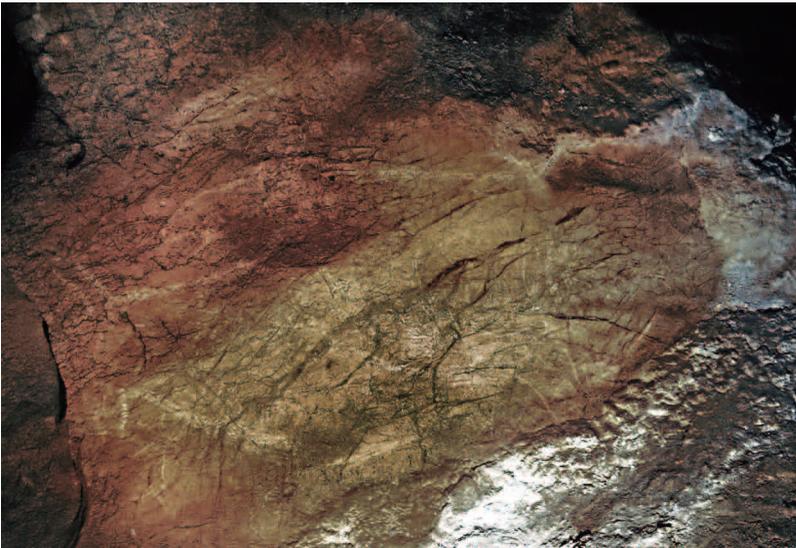


Fig. 2. The Whale Figure in Tito Bustillo (Photo: R. de Balbín)

Equally tenuous and, in my opinion, extremely implausible, is the recent interpretation of one rare motif on Neolithic menhirs in Brittany—usually seen as an axe or axe-plough—as a whale (Whittle 2000). The reasoning for this bizarre interpretation is that the motif is “in some way semi-representational” (ibid.: 245), its occurrence is coastal or near-coastal, and it “‘looks like’ a whale, seen from the side” (ibid.)—personally, I cannot see the slightest resemblance. The author goes on to refer (ibid.: 246) to the “difficulties both of seeing so large a creature as a whale in the first place in one go and then of representing it.” This reasoning is odd, when one considers that every other prehistoric culture which depicted the whale, from the Upper Palaeolithic onward and all over the world, managed to produce easily recognisable and quite accurate images of these creatures!

### Australia

Whale depictions are quite common on parts of the west and east coasts of Australia, whereas in the north of this vast country only a red porpoise image has been recorded, at Nanguluwurr (Chaloupka 1993: 179) (fig. 3), and there is what seems to be a large bottle-nosed dolphin painting in the Wellington Range of Arnhem Land (P. Taçon, pers. comm.) (fig. 4).

In the Sydney area, a whole series of whale petroglyphs—often enormous, life-size, and hence difficult to appreciate from ground-level—occur on horizontal rock surfaces at a number of sites, some of them named after these striking images (Stanbury & Clegg 1990). For example, at “Lovers and Whales” (ibid.: 54), the whale engraving is large, more than 10 m long, and may be either a pair, or a correction by the artist to the head of a single whale (figs. 5, 6). The site also has “lovers”, as well as a man close to the whale(s). The latter, as at many sites in this area, may be performing a rite to encourage whales to become stranded so as to provide



Fig. 3. The Nanguluwurr Porpoise  
(Photo: P. Bahn)



Fig. 4. The Wellington Range dolphin (Photo: P. Taçon)

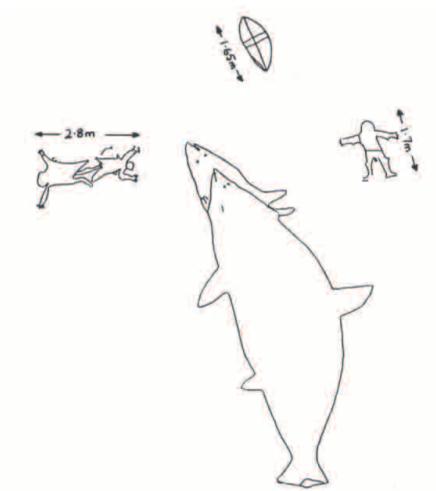


Fig. 5. Above: Lovers and Whales  
(Drawing: after Stanbury & Clegg)



Fig. 6. Right: Lovers and Whales  
(Photo: P. Bahn)

food for the tribe. At “Whale Feast” (ibid.: 80), a whale figure, about 6 m long, seems to be associated with 31 human figures next to it, which are interpreted as having ritual significance, associated with feeding on a stranded whale—it is even possible that the large man may be directing the proceedings. This site also contains a dolphin depiction.

The site of Ball’s Head (ibid.: 22-23) contains a man inside a whale (fig. 7). According to the authors, he may be lying in the whale to cure himself of an illness—a custom of those Aboriginal tribes that lived near the eastern seaboard. Another explanation is the more common one that this man is a magician performing a rite to entice a whale to become stranded so that the tribe may feast. Or perhaps neither explanation is correct, as they do not account for the other figures at the site—indeed, a recent study has found an extra person inside the whale. The site of Point Piper (ibid.: 27) had a whale figure, which is now destroyed. Gumbooya (ibid.: 28) has a rock surface that undulates, making whale or wave shapes, as well as distant ocean views. “Of the several whales one has teeth-like structures, perhaps indicating that it is a sperm whale. A dolphin can be clearly identified... One man appears to be standing on or in a whale. The usual interpretation is that he is performing some rite to entice the whale to become beached. Alternatively he may be standing or riding on the whale, feeling pleased that it has become stranded.” Finally, at Elvina Track (ibid.: 48) there is one large whale and the nose of another, while at America Track (ibid.: 60) one sees a large whale with a woman inside it (fig. 8).

At the opposite side of Australia, on the west coast, the innumerable

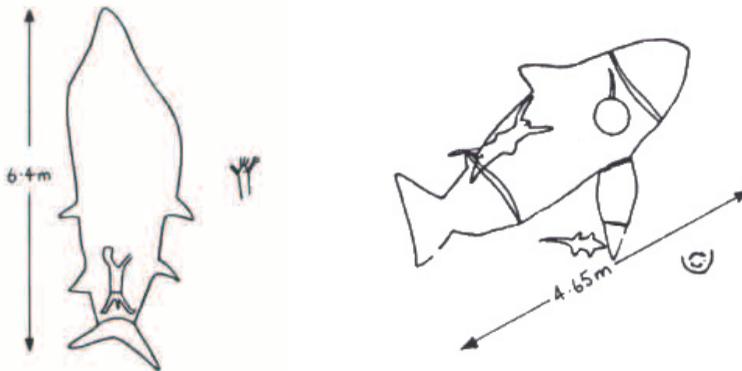


Fig. 7. Left: Ball’s Head (Drawing: after Stanbury & Clegg)

Fig. 8. Right: America Track (Drawing: after Stanbury & Clegg)

petroglyphs of the Burrup include a few recognisable whales, such as at Sea Ripple Passage (fig. 9), and Deep Gorge (K. Mulvaney, pers. comm.). There are also motifs which have been interpreted as whale tails (Dolphin Island (fig. 10); and Depuch Island). However, there are also quite a few depictions here which seem to represent dolphins or porpoises (Depuch Island, Deep Gorge, and King Bay South and North).



Fig. 9. Sea Ripple Passage (Photo: K. Mulvaney)



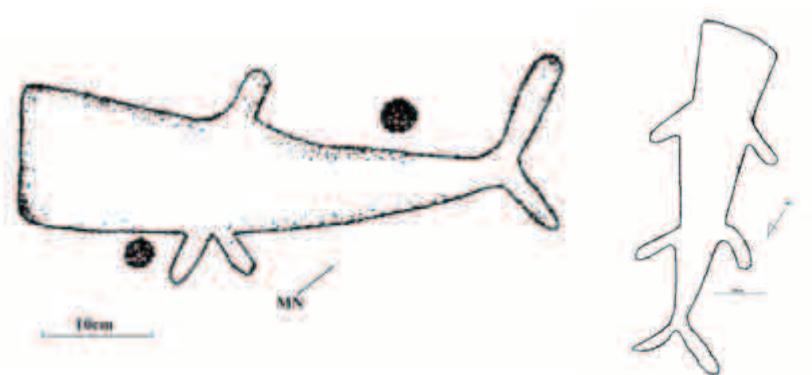
Fig. 10. Dolphin Island (Photo: K. Mulvaney)

## Pacific Islands

Where New Zealand is concerned, it is known that the German scientist and explorer Julius von Haast in 1876 visited the Weka Pass shelter in North Canterbury, where the paintings included whales (Trotter & McCulloch 1981: 7). One small drawing has been thought by some to be a spouting whale, but there are doubts as to its exact outlines (*ibid.*: 29). There are very few possible depictions of porpoises or dolphins, and none can be identified with any certainty (*ibid.*: 30; G. O'Regan, B. Allingham, A. Symon, pers. comms.). One figure in white paint at Benmore (N. Otago) looks like a porpoise, but it could simply be a stylised fish with an enlarged dorsal fin. Indeed in New Zealand, as in many other parts of the world, there are “fishlike figures” in rock art which may or may not be cetaceans—such as a possible dolphin at Frenchman's Gully.

In Polynesia, the greatest known collection of whale and porpoise images is to be found in the Marquesas Islands, especially on Nuku Hiva—perhaps due to the more intensive survey on that island. They are mostly found on isolated boulders with no apparent cultural association (S. Millerstrom 1997 and pers. comm.). As in New Zealand, many are somewhat vague so that the species cannot be identified, but in most cases there can be little doubt that cetaceans are depicted (figs. 11, 12).

On Easter Island, which has the richest rock art of the Pacific islands, there are surprisingly few images of cetaceans: the site of Hua on the north coast has a whale with a curly tail (Lee 1992: 85) (fig. 13), while on the monumental platform of Anakena there are bas-reliefs of whales or large fish (*ibid.*: 169). The island also has a few wonderful petroglyphs of dolphins (fig. 14).



Figs. 11, 12. Nuku Hiva (Drawing: courtesy S. Millerstrom)

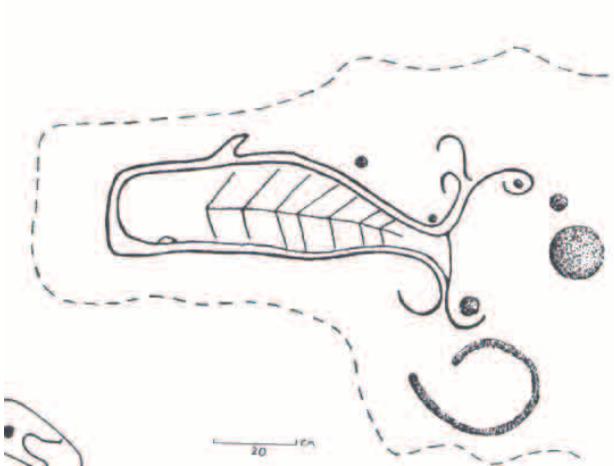


Fig. 13. Hua, Easter Island (Drawing: courtesy G. Lee)



Fig. 14. Easter Island dolphin (Photo: P. Bahn)

### South America

On the northern coast of Chile, south of Antofagasta, is the rock art site of El Médano, first mentioned in 1923 but not really studied till fifty years later (Berenguer 2008: 53). Among the 1500 images painted in red ochre, and thought to date to between the 5th and 16th centuries AD, there are more than 300 depictions of what are thought to be whales harpooned from small sealskin rafts, reflecting the huge importance of marine resources to these coastal peoples (Berenguer 2009) (figs. 15, 16).



Figs. 15, 16. El Médano (Photo: J. Berenguer)

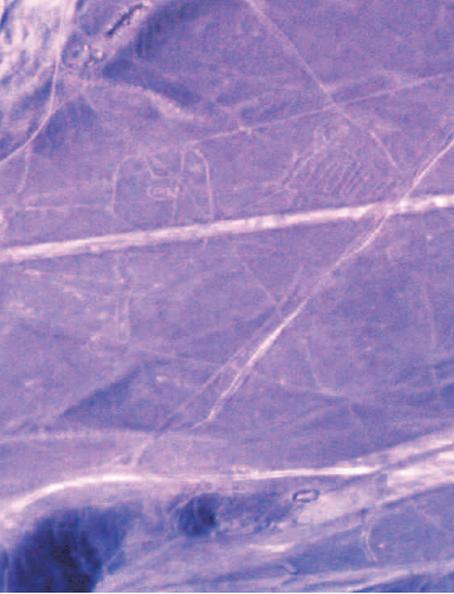


Fig. 17. Nasca (Photo: P. Bahn)

One can recognise the black pilot whale, the sperm whale and other species. El Médano is thought to be a very special cult or secret site, being several hours climb from the shore in a dry environment, and with 200 panels stretching over about 5 km at an altitude between 1300 and 1700 m asl. Other coastal rock art sites with a few images of cetaceans exist in this region—for example Las Lizas, where there are petroglyphs including dolphins (Berenguer 2008: 63; 2009: 67-69). As in Australia's Burrup, there are quite a number of triangular motifs which have been interpreted variously as fins of shark, dolphin or killer whale (Berenguer 2009: 71-72). Niemeyer (2010) believed that this was not simply a site for boasting of successful hunts by tiny vessels against enormous beasts, or for simple hunting narratives, but instead was a place of magic where depicting these animals meant holding power over them.

There are very few other examples of cetacean imagery along either coast of South America—certainly nothing is known in either Argentina (D. Fiore, pers. comm.), Brazil (A. Prous, pers. comm.), Venezuela (K. Scaramelli, pers. comm.), or Ecuador (D. González Ojeda, pers. comm.). In Peru, the famous geoglyphs of Nasca depict a wide range of species, including one enormous killer whale figure with a spiral eye (Aveni 2000: 192) (fig. 17), and another carrying a trophy human-head—killer whales were also sometimes present in ceramic form in the Nasca culture (again sometimes

holding a trophy head), and a whale occipital bone has even been found at Huaura which has painted designs on it (Cabrel 2008). In Colombia, no cetacean images are known in rock art (P. Arguello, D. Martínez, pers. comms.).

### Mesoamerica

Mexico, surprisingly, has only a few depictions of whales, and some of these are by no means certain. The most striking are a few enormous paintings in the shelters of Baja California. For example, in Cueva Pintada there is a gigantic figure in sketchy red strokes, made “with a chalklike substance or a dry brush” (Crosby 1997: 68). This is the largest figure in the site, and Crosby believes it to represent a whale. But while “the forepart, head and fins are admirable... the tail region is drawn more like a pair of elephantine legs than the fluke of a whale” (ibid.: 69), and hence other researchers think it could be a sealion or elephant seal. They are perhaps best seen as a compound animal, a “whale-seal” (L. Gutiérrez, pers. comm.) (fig. 18). Similarly, the site of San Gregorio II is dominated by a giant fish or dolphin, and also a huge whale which could also be seen as a sealion, perhaps the second largest image after Cueva Pintada. Its strange



Fig. 18. Left: Cueva Pintada (Photo: L. Gutiérrez)



Fig. 19. Right: San Gregorio II (Photo: L. Gutiérrez)

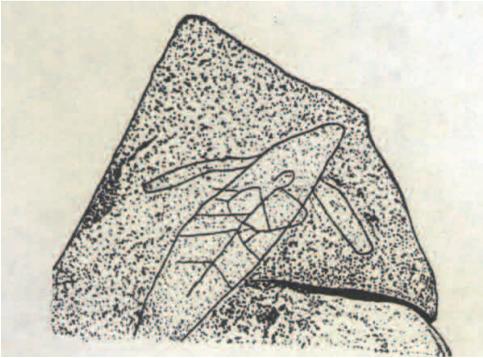


Fig. 20. Puerto Marques (After: Manzanilla & Talavera)

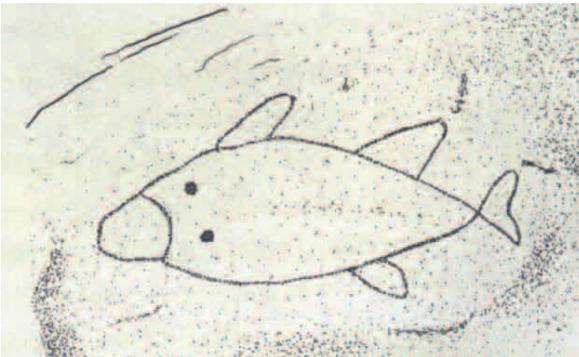


Fig. 21. La Sabana (After: Manzanilla & Talavera)



Fig. 22. Cueva de la Línea (Photo: D. Gutiérrez)

rear appendage is unlike a whale fluke, and so this too could be a pinniped (ibid.: 88-89) or a “whale-seal” (fig. 19). As Crosby pointed out, “A stranded whale... would have attracted much attention since it could supply a whole band with an unprecedented cache of protein. This painting (San Gregorio II) seems to show a whale breaching, an event the artist could have seen at Scammon’s Lagoon” (ibid.: 89).

In the Arroyo del Infierno, a huge red form outlined in white lies in a horizontal position along one wall of the cave; it appears to represent a whale (ibid.: 107). Sea creatures at other sites were normally painted in a vertical posture, with head up and tail down (as is most common at *Bangudae*). Here, the size of the wall permitted no such orientation. In San Sebastián, a row of five small whales were drawn head down, which is most unusual (ibid.: 170). Finally, in the centre-east part of the Sierra de Guadalupe there is an area with numerous representations of dolphins, including a very large specimen in one rock-shelter which could be a killer whale (L. Gutiérrez, pers. comm.).

Mexico’s Pacific coast also has a couple of clearer examples at Acaapulco Bay. At Puerto Marqués, there is a dramatic petroglyph of a hump-backed whale jumping out of the water (Manzanilla & Talavera 2008: 109) (fig. 20), while at La Sabana there is a depiction of a very large fish which could be a whale of some kind (ibid.: 128) (fig. 21).

On the Atlantic side of Mesoamerica, one can only cite a whale drawing in the Dominican Republic (Torres et al. 2011). The site, known as Cueva de la Línea, but also as Cueva de los Muñecos or del Ferrocarril, contains more than 1000 drawings, including the only whale depiction in the Antilles. This charcoal pictograph is almost at floor level, in an area of total darkness, and is about 60 cm long and 28 cm high (D. Gutiérrez, pers. comm.) (fig. 22).

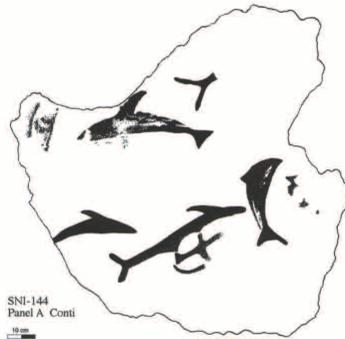
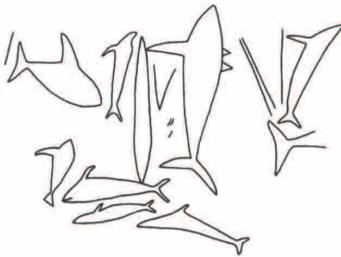
### **North America**

The Pacific coast of North America is one of the richest areas in the world for whale depictions but, surprisingly, only in the far north and north-west. California has very few known rock-art images of these creatures, although the Chumash Indians did produce some fine carvings in steatite and other stones (Grant 1993: 48, 64).

The Chumash also produced numerous very colourful rock paintings, which include a variety of geometric shapes and bifurcated forms which have often been interpreted as aquatic creatures (see Grant 1993),



Fig. 23. Indian Creek (Photo: R. Bury)



Figs. 24, 25. Cave of the Whales  
(Drawing: after Conti et al.)

and even as dolphins, with very little justification. There is, however, one depiction from Indian Creek which does bear a striking resemblance to a group of dolphins (Hudson & Conti 1984: 72) (fig. 23).

On San Nicolas Island, the outermost of southern California's Channel Islands, 60 miles off the coast in the Santa Barbara area, one finds the "Cave of the Whales" containing a number of drawings of killer whales (Conti et

al. 1999; Wellmann 1979: 67; Reinman & Townsend 1960; Rozaire & Kritzman 1960). Like the Chumash, the prehistoric inhabitants of the island also produced numerous stone effigies of whales and porpoises (Conti et al. 1999: 4). The cave contains both pictographs and petroglyphs of cetaceans (figs. 24, 25). By 1962 the lower portion of the main petroglyph panel had separated from the wall, and so it was eventually transferred as two slabs to the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles. It has been pointed out that the cave's natural geological formation may be viewed as similar to that of a whale—the large central space tapers towards the rear (or tail), and widens at the entrance (or mouth), so one can imagine being inside the belly of a whale (*ibid.*: 37).

It is, however, the northwest coast of the New World—just like the northwest coasts of Eurasia—which houses by far the largest quantity of cetacean depictions (Wellmann 1979: 31). For example, Lundy (1974: 102-109, 148) recorded them at seventeen petroglyph and nine pictograph sites. On Kodiak Island, Alaska, Heizer (1947) was able to identify the sperm whale, the killer whale, and perhaps the beluga or the porpoise, all of them solidly pecked. Killer whales are also represented in Cook Inlet Eskimo paintings (de Laguna 1933, 1934), in the Tlingit area of southeastern Alaska (Keithahn 1940), in Kitselas Canyon on the Skeena River (Meade 1971: 19), and near Clo-oose on Vancouver Island (Hill & Hill 1974: 78) (fig. 26).

At Cape Alava, Washington (Meade 1971: 82; Hill & Hill 1974: 68, 70), there are five petroglyph whales which reflect the importance of sea mammal hunting at Ozette and other Makah villages. Although a rich cer-



Fig. 26. Clo-oose Site (After: Hill & Hill)

emonialism was attached to their sea mammal hunting, and particularly to the hunting of whales, there is no evidence that the petroglyphs formed a part of such ceremonies. The petroglyph whales are marked by a double diagonal line across the body, and two short lines are carved diagonally downwards from the eyes—the so-called “weeping eye design”. The Cape Alava site also has a whale with a small whale-like figure inside, perhaps a pregnancy scene. Carvings of whales, some recognisable as finbacks, also occur near the Strait of Georgia (Meade 1971: 58-60).

In Alaska, Cape Alitak (Kodiak Island) there are petroglyphs of cetaceans—sperm whale, killer whale, and perhaps porpoise or beluga. The cetaceans are more concentrated on certain rocks (Hill & Hill 1974: 231). In Cook Inlet and on Kodiak Island, images of whales were apparently drawn by shamans or by members of the prestigious elite of whale hunters (de Laguna 1933, 1934; Heizer 1947; Wellmann 1979: 38). Lundy (1974: 299) concluded that “It seems reasonable that a great many coastal rock art sites were concerned with fishing activities either as indicators of fishing ownership rights, supernatural aids, or more simply, as indicators of potential”. She ascertained that, of the sixteen known petroglyph sites in the Nootka region, half can in some way be linked to whales or whaling ritual. Among the Eskimo, whaling activities figured strongly as a motive for the making of rock drawings (de Laguna 1933: 154; Heizer 1947).

Finally, Corner (1968: 46) mentions a site in British Columbia with a group suggesting a spouting whale with three stick-figure humans on its back that fight to keep their balance.

In stark contrast to the Pacific northwest, only one whale petroglyph is known on the North Atlantic seaboard, echoing the dearth of depictions in the South Atlantic (Wellmann 1979: 167, 170). This carving, at Kejimkujik Lake, Nova Scotia (Robertson 1973: fig. 51), may represent the tale of two mythological Micmac personages—Glooscap and Kitpooseagunow—who put to sea in a stone canoe, speared a whale, brought it ashore, split it open, and ate it at one sitting. The image is incised, but enhanced with white paint.

## **Africa**

Amazingly, in view of this continent’s vast coastline, there are very few depictions of cetaceans, and the few which seem to exist are not on the coast but a huge distance inland.

In North Africa, for some years, claims were made that a rock paint-



Fig. 27. Aus (After: Rudner & Rudner)

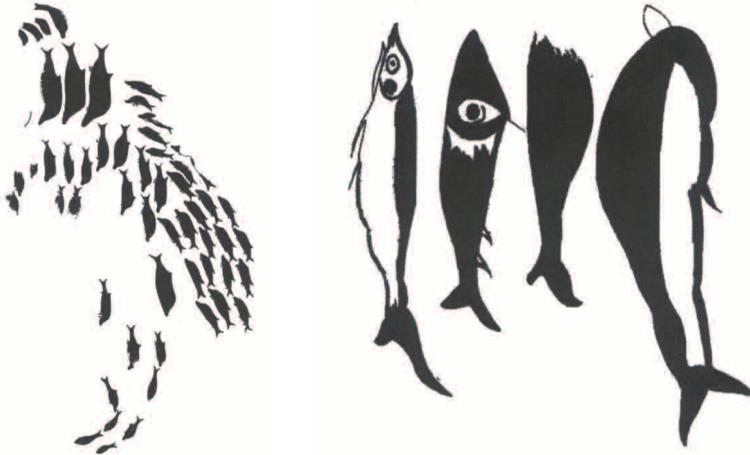


Fig. 28. Left: Ladybrand (After: van Riet Lowe)

Fig. 29. Right: Rose Cottage (After: Breuil)

ing on the ceiling of the rock-shelter at Tamadjert in the Tassili-n-Azjer depicted a “marine animal” being harpooned by a person in a boat. However, this was simply wishful thinking, and neither the boat nor the marine animal really exists (Le Quellec 2007: 118-19).

In Namibia, about 80 miles inland from the coast, a low overhang of limestone cliffs above the river near Aus contains dark red paintings which include a fish tail which could be a fish or a stranded whale (Rudner & Rudner 1959: 107-8) (fig. 27). A similar tail motif also occurs at Elands Bay Cave, in South Africa (A. Solomon, pers. comm.).

Further inland, more than 200 miles from the sea, in what was the Orange Free State, a rock removed from a rock-shelter on the Uysberg farm in the district of Ladybrand (and now housed in a museum) bears a

painting that has often been seen as a school of sea-fish being attacked by dolphins (Battiss 1944; Breuil 1944; Wells 1946) (fig. 28). Van Riet Lowe, on the other hand (1947: 41), saw it only as a school of dolphins: “the profiles of the best preserved figures, the presence of the fat fin and fore limbs and the form of the school are, I feel, clearly intended to depict dolphins”. Also in Ladybrand, in Rose Cottage Cave, Breuil (1944: 353) claimed that a large fishlike motif was a whale, stranded on its back, with one of its forward fins standing upright. “The extremely thick attachment of the tail and the forward part of the body, which is very swollen, is unlike a fish... The painting is 43 cm long from the head to the middle of the tail, painted in reddish brown” (ibid.) (fig. 29).

Other possible images of dolphins were presented by Lee & Woodhouse (1970: 51)—a scene of two men carrying a dolphin-like fish; and some other possible dolphin figures, 6 inches high, at Caledon’s Poort, a few miles away. The astonishing fact is that the Caledon is 1500 miles from the mouth of the Orange River, but the interpretation is perhaps reinforced by indisputable red-ochre depictions of whales in the Kalahari Desert, about 900 miles from the coast, at Female Hill in the Tsodilo Hills of northwestern Botswana (fig. 30).



Fig. 30. Tsodilo Hills (Photo: A. Grové)

## Russia and Scandinavia

There are numerous petroglyphs at Asia's northernmost rock art site, on the cliffs above the Pegtymel River in Chukotka, in northeast Siberia, some 40 to 50 km from the coast of the East Siberian Sea. They feature a number of whales, including scenes of sea-hunting for whales, white whales and other sea mammals from multi-seat boats with harpoons on lines (Devlet & Devlet 2005: 70) (figs. 31 - 33a/b).

The northwest part of Russia also has a great wealth of cetacean imagery in Karelia, as well as the Kola Peninsula (e.g. Devlet & Devlet 2005: fig. 184), especially on the island of Kamennaya in Lake Kanozero (figs. 34 - 39).

In Karelia, in the southwest corner of the White Sea, some of the best known depictions are near the mouth of the River Vyg at the sites of Besovi Sledki and Zalavruga—here too there are clear sea-hunting scenes, involving white whales (beluga) harpooned from boats (Savvatejev 1970, 1977, 1984). As at *Bangudae*, the whales are found within complex panels which also feature many other kinds of animals as well as humans (figs. 40 - 43).

Despite Sweden's immense wealth of petroglyphs, only one small and insignificant cetacean depiction is known at Tanum (Coles 2005: 136); while there is another doubtful dolphin petroglyph at Nämforsen, as well as one possible whale (Stölting 1988: 241; 1990: 236).

Last, but far from least, cetacean images exist in the rock art of northern and southeast Norway, but most especially central Norway (e.g. Gjessing 1932, 1936; Hallström 1938). Indeed it has been estimated that around 80% of all cetacean figures in Europe are located in central Norway (K. Sognnes, pers. comm.). Only a few are known in the far north, amid the rich rock art of Alta (Helskog 1988)—here, however, there are also frequent depictions of huge halibut, and the hunting of halibut, and it is not always clear which species is represented.

One survey of whales in Scandinavia (Stölting 1988, 1990) reported a total of about a hundred depictions in various sites along the coast of Norway, plus the couple in Sweden. More have been found since then. One cannot present all the examples here; suffice it to mention a few of the best depictions—for example, the magnificent 2-metre petroglyph at Strand, thought by Gjessing (1932, 1936) to be a pilot whale (fig. 44).

Other major sites include Hammer (Bakka 1988) (fig. 45), Stjørdal (Sognnes 1983) and Averøya (Sognnes 1996) (figs. 46, 47), as well as Evenhus, Salneset (fig. 48) and Skogervejen. Kalle Sognnes (pers. comm.) is currently preparing a new detailed study of what is, clearly, the greatest collection of whale images in rock art anywhere in the world.



Fig. 31. Pegtymel (Photo: E. Miklashevich)



Fig. 32. Pegtymel (Photo: E. Miklashevich)

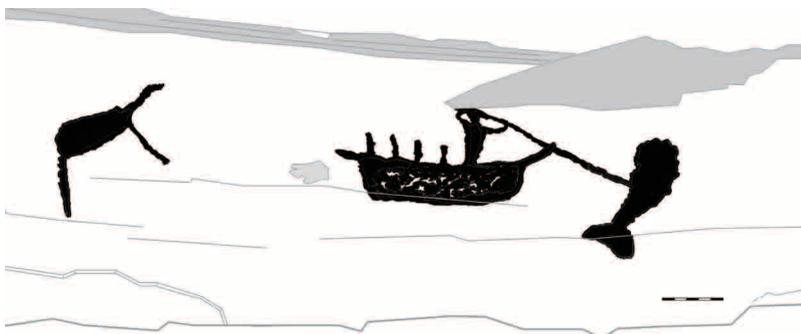


Fig. 33 a/b. Pegtymel (Photo: E. Miklashevich)



Fig. 34. Kan Lake (Photo: E. Devlet)



Fig. 35. Kamennaya (L. Joekalda)



Fig. 36 - 39. Kamennaya (L. Joekalda)

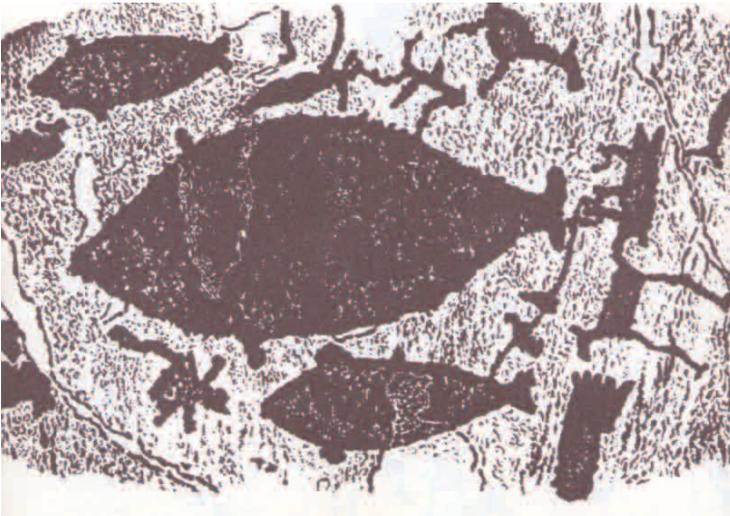


Fig. 40. Besovi Sledki (Photo: L. Joekalda; Drawing: after Savvatejev)



Fig. 41. Cape Besov (Photo: L. Joekalda)



Fig. 42-43. Zalavruga (L. Joekalda)



Fig. 44. Strand (Photo: K. Sognnes, NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet)

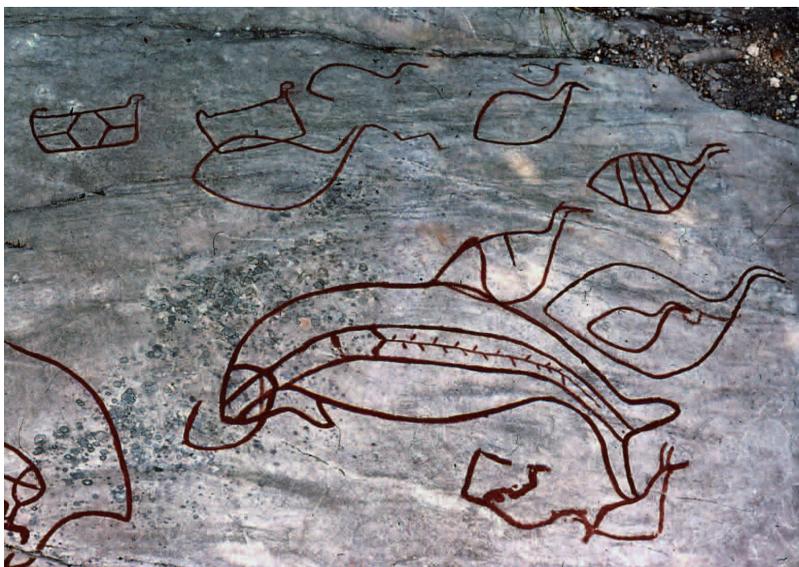


Fig. 45. Hammer (Photo: K. Sognnes, NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet)

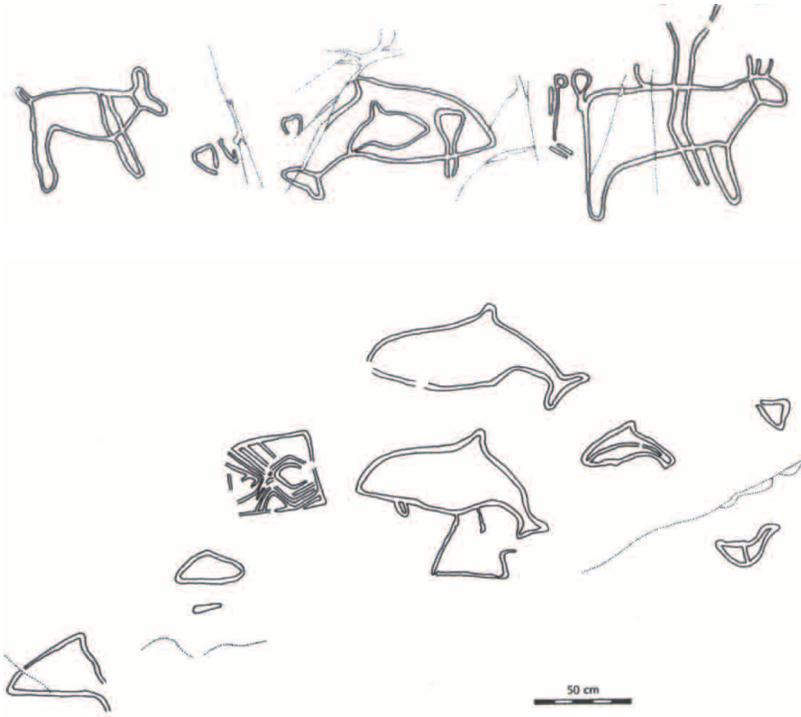


Fig. 46, 47. Averøya (After: Sognnes)



Fig. 48. Salneset (Photo: K. Sognnes, NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet)

## Conclusion

Three main points emerge from this preliminary survey of cetaceans in world rock art. The first, of course, is that it is not always straightforward to identify whales or dolphins, especially the latter, where the images are not particularly naturalistic. Nevertheless, in many cases, interpreters have felt able not only to identify cetaceans, but also a particular species of whale, such as a cachalot or a killer whale. In the vast majority of cases, however, little reason is given for the interpretation. The new detailed analyses of such figures, both in Norway and at Bangudae, are therefore a most welcome advance.

The second striking feature is the extraordinarily uneven distribution of such images. They are completely absent, in our present state of knowledge, from vast territories such as China, India (E. Neumayer, pers. comm.), and most of Africa—and it is somewhat bizarre that the best examples in Africa are hundreds of miles from its coastline. Even areas which one might expect to feature images of cetaceans—such as Hawaii—have none, whereas other Pacific islands like Nuku Hiva have many.

The third and most interesting aspect of the subject is that whale depictions occur in many different parts of the world, and it is known from archaeology and/or oral tradition and myth that cetaceans were exploited by many ancient coastal cultures (e.g. see the classic study by Clark 1947). And yet only three areas so far have yielded clear depictions of the hunting of these animals—Northwest Russia, Northeast Siberia, and one site in Chile! This is highly surprising, since one would have thought that the ability, skill and courage needed to kill such huge beasts would lead to far more proud examples being presented in rock art. This may therefore be further evidence that rock art is not usually a straightforward depiction of events, but rather a presentation of beliefs, myths and so forth. It will also be recalled that in Southeast Australia the association of whale images and human figures is thought to represent ceremonies aimed at encouraging the animals to beach and thus feed the tribe—this could perhaps be seen as a different form of hunting.

Certainly beached whales would have provided the best opportunities for ancient peoples to see these creatures at close hand, and such events are by no means rare—for example, according to Clark (1947), between 1913 and 1926 there were no less than 407 strandings of seventeen different species of whale on the shores of Britain; and the potential bonanza of such events was enormous—in historic times, according to the 16th-century account by Olaus Magnus (cited by Clark, *ibid.*), a single whale

could fill between 250 and 300 wagons and yield meat for salting, blubber for lighting and heating, small bones for fuel, large ones for house-building, and enough hide to clothe forty men. From Britain alone there is plentiful skeletal evidence of the stranding of whales during prehistoric times, and such evidence even extends back to the Lower Palaeolithic—e.g. in Angola, where the site of Dungo yielded a 12-m whale skeleton associated with 57 choppers and other Oldowan stone tools, dating to more than 350,000 years ago (Lee 2002: 64).

The Bangudae site is 22 km west of the Korean coast. It is virtually unique in the world in that its 248 petroglyphs comprise no fewer than 52 cetaceans (i.e. almost 20%), including a probable scene of a mother with her calf on her back; three small vertical whales in a row and apparently spouting; and three dolphins thought to be leaping from the water (Lee 2002, 2011). As we have seen above, it is extremely rare to see much movement or behavioural activity in images of cetaceans, most of which appear quite static. I confess, however, that—unlike Lee (*ibid.*)—I do not see any clear depictions at Bangudae of the actual hunting or harpooning of whales. I have no doubt that the local prehistoric culture was perfectly capable of such exploitation of the animals—their accurate depictions are sufficient evidence for this—but there are no indisputable images of harpooned animals such as one finds in a few other parts of the world.

In short, where the depiction of cetaceans in prehistoric rock art is concerned, Bangudae undoubtedly represents one of the richest and most important sites in the world. In terms of layout, the only analogy I have encountered is at Besovi Sledki, in northwest Russia (fig. 49), but there, of



Fig. 49. Besovi Sledki (Drawing: after Savvatejev)

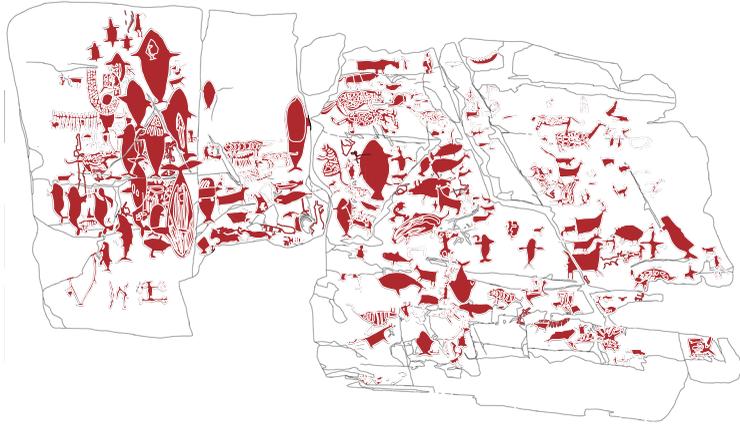


Fig. 50. Bangudae (Drawing: University of Ulsan)

course, the petroglyphs are on a flat rock rather than a vertical cliff-face as at Bangudae (fig. 50), although the figures on the panel are mostly orientated in more or less the same direction! It is obvious at both sites that the panels are complex accumulations of figures which may represent different seasons, different activities, and/or different myths.

Bangudae may be the richest vertical panel of petroglyphs known anywhere in the world. Apart from remote Pegtymel, it has the only known depictions of whales in the whole of Asia; and it has the biggest number of whale depictions of any petroglyph site in the world.