

A Proposal for Integration of Heritage and Tourism

Una propuesta de integración del Patrimonio y el Turismo

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ABSTRACT

Following other experiences regarding the enhancement of Heritage, we present a proposal of trekking and of Archaeotourism itineraries that aims to integrate the Natural and Archaeological Heritage of Oukaïmeden. Other experiences prove that the archaeological tourism has a positive impact in many rural areas, boosting social and economic improvements and new jobs opportunities. The paper describes the itineraries proposed, the methodology developed, the signalling system, protective actions as much as the visiting sites suggested.

KEY WORDS: *Heritage, Archaeotourism, trekking, rock art, itineraries.*

RESUMEN

De acuerdo con otras experiencias relativas a la puesta en valor del Patrimonio, presentamos una propuesta de itinerarios de senderismo y Arqueo-turismo, dirigida a integrar el patrimonio natural y arqueológico de Oukaïmeden. Otras experiencias prueban que el turismo arqueológico tiene un impacto positivo en las áreas rurales, impulsando mejoras sociales y económicas y ofreciendo nuevas oportunidades de empleo. El artículo describe los itinerarios propuestos, la metodología de trabajo desarrollada, el sistema de señalética, las medidas de protección además de los sitios visitables propuestos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Patrimonio, Arqueo-turismo, senderismo, arte rupestre, itinerarios.*

Introduction

Since the beginning, one of the main commitments of the ARPA's team was to achieve, not only scientific goals, but also to produce knowledge that could be transferred to society. We wished that the project could have a beneficial impact both on the area where the project was being carried out and within the general public, who actually fund this research and therefore should benefit by its results. In the specific case of Oukaïmeden, there was another reason for developing a project to promote rock art as a touristic resource. Several authors have already highlighted (Mahdi 2010, Mahdi and Domínguez 2009 and this book) the deep and not always positive changes that modernity is causing among Berber shepherds and their traditional lifestyle, adapted to a fragile and unstable resource, as are the summer pastures in a high mountain valley.

As explained above, some years ago, the Hard and Soft project planned by Emaar Properties, aimed to transform the valley into a touristic ski resort throughout the year. That project would not only have affected the archaeological and ethnographic heritage, but would also have a direct impact on the water flow to the villages located half-way up the *Ourika* Valley, which are the permanent residences of some of the shepherds that every summer migrate to the Oukaïmeden Valley with their flocks.

Fortunately, the Moroccan Heritage Authorities acted diligently issuing negative reports and the project seems to have been definitively abandoned. However, new threats may emerge in the future.

Therefore, the project presented in the following pages is only a proposal, whose implementation or rejection depends on the Moroccan Heritage Authorities, those who have the competences and capacity to take actions on the protection and enhancement of the rock art heritage.

Following other experiences regarding the enhancement of Heritage the main aspects taken into consideration when designing this proposal were:

a) The integration of Natural and Archaeological Heritage of Oukaïmeden: For instance, Zilhão (2000:62) claimed regarding the Côa rock art, that the whole Côa Valley and not just the art was the monument that it should be preserved. The integration of Archaeological Heritage within its natural scenery is a constant demand by all those who deal with Heritage as cultural, social and economic assets (Criado and Gonzalez 1996:60; Martinez 2000: 70; Querol 2002:11-12).

b) The preservation of rock art: Moroccan legislation on that matter or even Unesco legislation on the subject will do its job, as in other Archaeological Heritage areas (Zilhão 2000:61; Sanchez et al. 2000:195-198). We just suggest some measures easy to implement to preserve some rock-art stations in greater risk.

c) Local population should be the main beneficiary of the possible revenues of archaeological tourism: Archaeological tourism, offers the opportunity for boosting social and economic improvements in many rural areas, offering new jobs opportunities, engaging young population and avoiding in that way emigration and depopulation (Delibes 2000: 102; del Canto 2005:204 and ff). Experiences as those of the Foz Côa Park, where guides are hired among young people of the neighbour villages (Zilhão 2000: 62), or the one of the cooperatives constituted in Sardinia by young people for the touristic management of archaeological sites, under the tutelage of Heritage's authorities (del Canto 2005:207-208) are just two examples of this opportunities. In all these cases, guides are instructed and formed by the archaeological responsible of the park. A non negligible effect of these policies is the involvement of local people with appreciation and respect of their heritage (Jimeno 2000:187-188; Zilhão 2000: 62; del Canto 2005: 214-215; Oosterbeck *et alii* 2010:497 and ff).

d) Type of visit and visitor profile: Oukaïmeden is 75 km far from one of the most touristic cities in Morocco and reachable by a paved route. In summertime, when temperatures reach 45°C in Marrakech, Oukaïmeden is a common destination for both local and foreign tourists, who make one-day trips to refresh themselves in the much cooler Oukaïmeden, returning to Marrakech usually after having dinner in one of the local restaurants. In addition, Oukaïmeden is one of the only two ski resorts existing in North Africa. (The other one, *Mishliffen*, is located near Fez). The ski facilities are sometimes open until the spring, and attract both local and foreign users due to their competitive prices in comparison to European ski resorts, even if the facilities are modest and a bit old. Lastly and more important, the valley belong to the *Toubkal* National Park, which includes the highest peak in the Atlas, at 4167 m.a.s.l. which gives the name to the Park. Although the *Toubkal* peak is relatively far away from

Oukaïmeden, it still receives a good amount of trekking and climbing fans, who either climb the *Angour* (3614 m.a.s.l.), the second highest mountain in the park, or walk down from Oukaïmeden to *Asni* through the beautiful *Rerhaya* Valley. These types of visitors come especially in fall and late spring, for trekking, climbing, bird watching or mountain biking. Their profile respond in most cases to educated people, interested in environmental and cultural matters, thus given to learn about the visiting country's culture and heritage. This is also the usual profile of other Archaeological Parks' visitors (Zilhão 2000:62; Sanchez *et al.* 2000: 206; Jimeno 2000: 189; del Canto 2005:210 and ff). The present writers and other ARPA's members have met some of these tourists during our field campaigns. Quite surprisingly, they were well informed about most aspects of Oukaïmeden natural heritage -including birds, mountains and trekking routes in the area- but they knew nothing about the archaeological importance of Oukaïmeden rock art. This lack of awareness extends to many of the local inhabitants, as the French female owner of the main restaurant and hotel in Oukaïmeden, who has been running the business for years, but had never visited any of the rock art sites although she knew of their existence. After a short tour of the valley with a team member, visiting some rock art stations, she declared to be delighted and eager to see more.

Although in some cases, itineraries are designed to be visited either with a guide or on their own, most of the open air rock art parks are visited under guided tour, and this is also our proposal for the present case. The proposal of guided tours of small groups of visitors with a trained guide fulfils several goals: it offers job opportunities, keeps the number of visitors under control and prevents rock art looting.

With these ideas in mind, we propose the design of several trekking routes throughout the valley that will show some of the most relevant engravings documented during the field campaigns, along with some of the most spectacular natural views in the area. The purpose of them is, on the one hand, adding a cultural resource to the valley visitors, usually mountaineers or wildlife lovers who would see these routes as a complement to their main sport or leisure activities. On the other hand, the routes would also offer an instrument to local schools to learn about their rich Heritage, as a part of their didactic activities.

The trekking and archaeotourism itineraries that we suggest rely on the information obtained during the four campaigns at Oukaïmeden. They were designed and tested during our 2011-12 campaign¹, including the points where signals and posters containing information should be located. A standardized sheet was prepared for every point included in the route, generally a rock art station. The sheet described the route number, departure and arrival points, approximate duration of the tour, description of the engraving included as a visiting point, a georeferenced photo, whether a signal or poster was needed and in that case, the poster content or signal location and, eventually if the rock art station needed to be protected.

Under the following criteria, a selection of rock art stations was made, insofar as they fulfilled some of the following criteria:

The visiting points of every route had to have a significant number of engravings or have just one, but exceptional engraving.

The kind of depiction engraved had to be easily identifiable by non-experts viewers.

They had to be located near some of the proposed routes, so that visiting them would not involve a significant detour from the route.

The selection of routes and rock art sites was made using the GIS software, looking for itineraries with the lowest friction -that is, those theoretically easier routes. These were later tested by some team members to check their hardship and length, in order to discard rock art stations that were either redundant or an unnecessary prolongation of the tour. It was assumed that most visitors would have only a layman's knowledge and interest on rock art, so the specific rock art sites should be complemented by natural landscapes or visits to some of the shepherds' *azib*. Therefore, the selection of rock art sites to be included into itineraries was based on quality rather than quantity. The only way to test that all the itineraries proposed using GIS tool were feasible, was to go through them. Furthermore, we needed to know practically how many interpretive posters and signals that should be installed and with what content, where to install them, and if additional protective measures were needed. During the walk -performed under a heavy snowfall- all relevant points were recorded with a photo camera with GPS, and sheet were fulfilled in a laptop and added to the GIS database.

The itineraries are intended to be visited with a trained guide who explains, keeps up and protects both the routes and the rock art sites. The maintenance of the different elements - posters, signals, rock art sites, etc - is fundamental to prevent their deterioration and to make good on the initial investment.

However, at least one case -Route 1, which has no difficulties as it runs around the Oukaïmeden village-, could be performed without the services of a guide. In this case, the visitor could just follow the indications about the route in the main poster that would be installed at the entrance of the village, next to a building belonging to the *Ministère des Eaux et Forêts*. Another possibility would be to print brochures in several languages (Arabic, French, English or others) with the itinerary layout and a short explanation of the poster and the route points, to be acquired for in hotels and lodges. Anyway, in order to control the number of visitors and to protect rock art panels it would be better that all routes were guided.

Only three informative posters have been planned at the entrance of the village.

The first one would synthesize the history of the valley's landscape from the first seasonal but regular use in the Late Neolithic to the present, including the transformations induced both by humans and climate as well as and the human impact on the area. The information contained in the poster would be based on the paleoecological analysis, radiocarbon dating and archaeological information gathered by the ARPA project, briefly explained and including visual information.

A second poster would explain the main features of the engravings and the use of rock art as a mnemonic device to organizing the landscape and controlling critical resources, again widely based on the information of the ARPA project

Eventually, a third and smaller poster would display the three proposed itineraries and their extensions, including information about duration, the level of difficulty and signage.

None of the routes is very exhausting, their difficulty ranging from low to medium at the most. Even in the latter case, trekkers can choose either to complete the itinerary, or simply doing half of it.

Route 1 Blue colour. (fig. 1)

Outward and return trekking time: 1 hour

Difficulty: low

Length: 1.5 km

Number of visited rock sites: 4 (can be extended to 5)

The route starts at the *Club Alpine Français* (CAF). From there, it heads west until it reaches a large rock art station by the bus stop. This is the first rock art site of the tour. It is a large, sloped slab

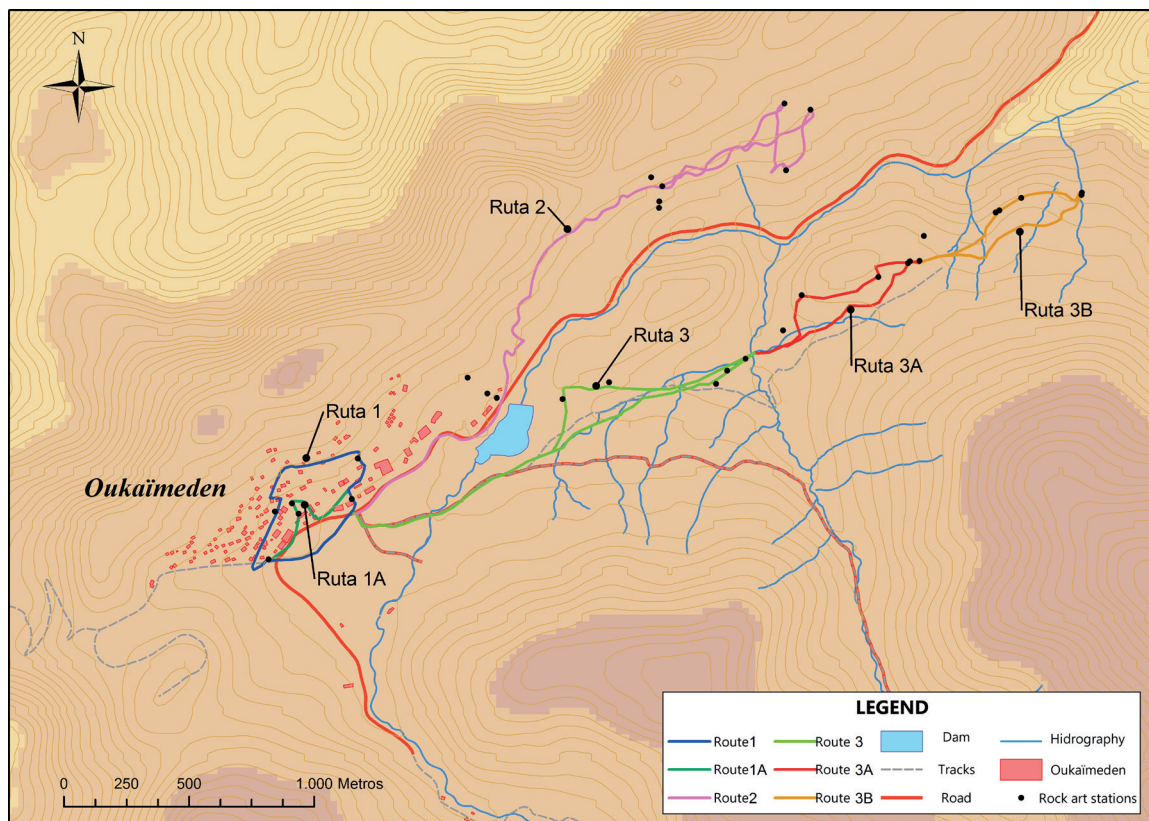


Fig. 1. Map of the itineraries.

that features several engravings, including a good amount of weapon depictions.

After going around the slab, the visitor takes the path to the right that enters the village and the route continues for about 300 meters to the house known as *Maison Barudi* (Barudi House) where the second rock art site is located. This site holds a good example of engraved halberds.

From this site, the itinerary follows the road to the east until it approaches the rear of the Louka Hotel, where the visitor has to leave the path for approximately 30 meters downhill, arriving at one of the best known engravings in Oukaïmeden rock art, the so called "*L'homme de Pinguet*", the depiction of a man with a knife and a rectangular scutiform engraved on an almost horizontal slab.

From this rock there are two options:

Option 1: To retrace our steps to the wall that surrounds the "*Maison Riche*" (Riche House) where a slab with a large engraved circular motive, locally known as the "*Le circle de Pinguet*" (Pinguet's circle) can be observed. From here, we can either end the route at the starting point (CAF), or visiting a fifth site (Option 2).

Option 2 (dark green colour): To continue waking down for 20 meters from the Man of Pinguet slab, until the visitor arrives at a rock with a beautiful engraved bovid of long tail topped in trident-like form, just behind the CAF building, where the itinerary ends.

Route 2 (pink colour. See fig. 1)

Outward and return trekking time: 3.5 hours

Difficulty: low-average

Length: 4 km

Number of visited rock sites: 7

As in the first route, the itinerary starts at the CAF heading towards the facilities of the *Ministère des Eaux et Forêts* opposite to the dam. Here the first stop in the route is done in order to visit a very rich rock art station with several panels, among which we can see a schematic anthropomorph, a cruciform motif, or a four legged elephant together with an anthropomorph in profile and a bovine with horns in skewed perspective.

The route continues to the north for about 30 meters, where one of the most emblematic engravings in the valley lies: a detailed, naturalistic bovid totally pecked. Local people call it "The pretty Bull". After this, the route turns to the east for approximately 1.3 km until it reaches a horizontal slab where two engraved daggers have been depicted.

The next site is about 700 meters away in the same direction, towards a mountain pass called the Bull's pass or *Tizi n'Gar Issafen* in Berber language, after the exceptional engraving of a bull depicted on a wide extension of reddish rock. The bull is a large, with pecked outline and is represented in full profile.

After watching this wonderful engraving, the visitor takes the route to the southwest for about 250 meters to visit a huge shelter with a fallen slab, whose horizontal surface is full of enigmatic engravings, cup marks, two schematic halberds and many geometric designs.

From this shelter, the itinerary returns to the point of departure, with a stop after 500 meters to see another rock art station. The engravings show a big, pecked bovid from which protrudes a wavy line, a much eroded small horse, a dagger and another bovid.

The last visit brings the visitor again to the *Ministère des Eaux et Forêts*' building, where at its rear, a schematic bovine has been carved on a rock slab. The itinerary ends at the CAF where it started.

Route 3 (See fig. 1)

In fact, this third route includes three different alternatives: a short route from the village to the *Irini* River's ford (bright green colour itinerary), a medium length extension of this itinerary (red plus bright green itineraries), and the longest route, which runs from the village to the *Abadsan Shelter* and back (orange itinerary in addition to the previous ones). The second and third itineraries are in fact, extensions of the bright green itinerary.

Bright green itinerary

Outward and return trekking time: 1.5 hours

Difficulty: average

Length: 3.6 km

Number of visited sites: 7

Red Itinerary (Extension 1)

Outward and return trekking time: 3 hours

Difficulty: average

Length: 5.5 km

Number of visited rock sites: 11

Orange itinerary (Extension 2)

Outward and return trekking time: 6 hours

Difficulty: average

Length: 7 km

Number of visited rock sites: 16

Bright green itinerary

The route starts at the CAF, following the track towards the *Agouns Azib* for about 850 meters. There, a detour must be taken to the left to reach a prehistoric barrow with a spiral symbol on one of its slabs. From the barrow, the visitor has to walk about 800 meters to the east to one of the most significant sites in the valley: the “Elephants’ Frieze”, a splendid vertical rock surface with depictions of elephants, a feline, a rhino or warthog and two human figures, as well as two vertical Libyan-Berber scripts overlapped to the figures.

Following a small stream downwards to the north-east for 100 meters lies the third rock art station of this itinerary: a large rock surface featuring daggers, animals and circular signs, located near a small shepherd shelter.

From there, the itinerary continues down to the *Tiferguine* Stream, where there is a large slab with two small bovinds. A bit further east, by the riverbank, stands a boulder with two bovinds engraved on one of its sides.

From this point, the visitor retraces his steps up the opposite slope toward the *Tiferguine Azib*, walking for about 500 meters to reach a big rock surface with several big circular shapes, some of which are filled with geometric designs and have been interpreted as possible shields.

The route continues along the slope for about 200 meters, where a small animal interpreted as a hyena has been engraved on a rock face. This is the last rock art station in this itinerary, which continues toward the starting point at the CAF.

Red itinerary (Extension 1)

If the first extension of the itinerary is included, from the *Tiferguine* stream the route goes east for about 1 km to the *Igountar* pass, where a slab with several images can be observed. The most remarkable figure is a naturalistic bovid with its head turned backwards.

From this group of engravings the itinerary turns to the *Igountar* pass, whose north side is characterized by rock outcrops with plenty of rock art engravings, including a four legged equine, weapons and large human figures. Now, the itinerary turns to the

west, reaching a new site; a rock surface of approximately four square meters where a large circular human figure and a big mace to its right can be visited. From this point, the route connects with the Green itinerary to retrace the itinerary toward the CAF, including the aforementioned sites on that route.

Orange Itinerary (Extension 2)

This is the longest proposed itinerary, prolonging the route 800 meters to the east to reach the Elephant’s shelter, one of the most important groups of engravings which includes elephants, cattle and other symbols. The roof of the shelter has a small rock surface containing a group of schematic engravings including footprints, anthropomorphic figures and cupules.

From the Elephant’s (or *Abadsan*) shelter, the itinerary turns again to the northeast for about 280 meters to reach a small slab where an splendid halberd and a dagger have been depicted .

Leaving this slab behind and continuing to the northeast for 100 more meters another group of engravings can be seen, distributed along different surfaces and consisting of halberds, anthropomorphs, animals, shield-like shapes and weapons. From this point on, the route returns to connect with the Green Itinerary and returning to the CAF and including all the aforementioned sites in that part of the route.

Summary

In these pages, we have suggested some possible trekking routes, visiting prehistoric monuments – tumuli -, rock art, ethnographic elements – *azibs* – and panoramic views, easy to implement in a one-day visit to the valley, that complement other leisure activities already going on in the area.

Our aim is to offer a way to enhance the rich natural and cultural heritage of Oukaïmeden. But to this, it is essential to maintain the natural landscape of the valley and its traditional uses, as well as to preserve, maintain and add value to the archaeological and ethnographic heritages.

Such a task is beyond our possibilities; therefore the preceding pages are only a suggestion about the rich potential of the area.

NOTE

1. Although the field campaign corresponded to 2011, funds were delivered in January 2012 and work had to be carried out under heavy snow between end March-early April 2012. Youssef Bokbot, Hipólito Collado, Pablo de la Presa and the present writer, tested the itineraries.