

---

## Book Review

# Mauritanian Rock Art: A New Recording

Sherine Ramadan

---

**Book Title:** Mauritanian Rock Art: A New Recording

**Author:** Hamdy Abbas Abd-El-Moniem

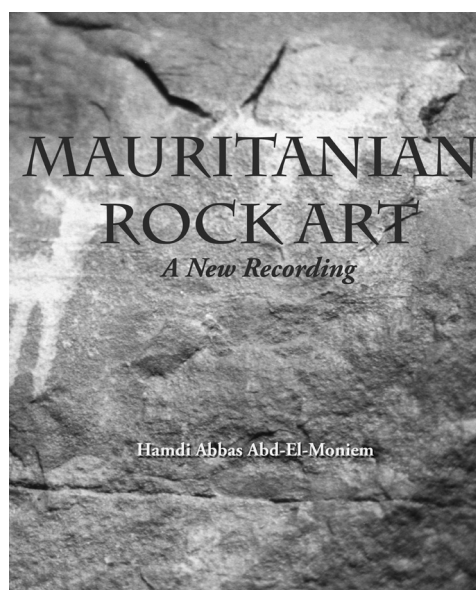
**Publisher:** Bibliotheca Alexandrina

**Year of Publication:** 2010

**ISBN:** 978-977-452-113-2

**No. of Pages:** 184

**Book Size:** 28x32 cm



‘Mauritanian Rock Art: A New Recording’ is an attempt to utilise new methods and techniques for recording rock art in north-west Africa. The main aim of this book is three-fold: to bring attention to the Mauritanian rock art which has received little attention compared with the rock art of other parts of the Saharan zone; to make a new recording of this corpus with special emphasis on a number of elements that previous work either ignored or omitted; and to carry out two different interpretative analyses in order to gain a better understanding of the recorded corpus (as an example of the Mauritanian rock art).

Dr. Hamdi Abbas Ahmed Abd-El-Moneim is an eminent Egyptian scholar and one of a

few scholars specializing in the history and development of rock art. After he obtained his PhD from the University of London on Mauritanian rock art, he was keen to publish his valuable and unique work. Mauritanian Rock Art: A New Recording is an attempt to apply new methods and techniques for recording rock art in North-West Africa. This book is divided into six chapters as follows:

Chapter One: Mauritanian Rock Art: Why, Where, what and How

This chapter is divided into four sections: Why Mauritanian rock art have chosen for this book; Where in the Mauritanian Sahara the author decided to seek new rock art sites; what to record and How recordings of Mauritanian rock art have been made.

## Chapter Two: Critical Review of Previous Research

If we compare work on Mauritanian rock art with that of the other parts of the Saharan zone, we can conclude that very little research has been conducted in this western part of the Sahara. Despite this, a number of researchers have made important contributions to the study of the Mauritanian corpus.

## Chapter Three: The Need for a Guide of Animal Identification and Other Related Problems:

This chapter discusses in the minimum number of pointers that are required to suggest a positive identification of an animal representation. This discussion will be based upon zoological knowledge. I will also mention the most important problems that may occur in the classification of animal representations.

From this point of view, what the author needs is to specify the unarguable parts or the details that provide him or her with a solid basis for a positive identification. Hence, attributing specific animal characteristics to the studied animal representations requires a considerable accumulation of the zoological knowledge to guide the researcher in achieving this aim (i.e. specifying at least the minimum number of the pointers required for identification).

## Chapter Four: Description of the Recording Work in the North of Atar – Mauritanian Adrar

In this chapter, the author gives a description of the engravings found at both sites mentioned in Chapter one. These descriptions will serve as the basis for detailed

interpretative analyses in the following chapters.

The aim of this description is to work from isolated engravings to groups of engravings taking into account the styles and techniques employed and the way in which the rock is used for the engravings. Forms, compositions, correlations between engravings, patina and cases of superimposition will also be considered.

## Chapter Five: Northern Atar Engraving and Past Saharan Environments

This chapter discusses four integrated issues concerning the potential relation between rock art and past environments in the Sahara. The first issue is related to the validity of rock art in reconstructing past environments. The second issue is based on the discussion of how rock art has been used in early Saharan archaeology to document environmental changes. The third issue represents a critique of this use of rock art by showing how this sort of interpretation is at the mercy of changing archaeological data, and can lead to circularities in argument; and how environmental reconstruction in the Sahara during the Holocene has become more sophisticated. The fourth and last issue is devoted to considering the utility of my own data for the environmental paradigm.

## Chapter Six: Northern Atar Engravings: A Culture-Historical Approach

This chapter, which deals with these engravings from a culture-historical perspective, is an initial attempt to give an answer to this question and to place the recorded work within a culture historical context.

## Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Prospects

This chapter describes the contributions made by the “new recording” of Mauritanian rock art and summarises the main findings of the work (the implications of the Atar rock art: its dates and its cultural associations). It also defines the interpretative approaches taken versus more “shamanistic” ones. This chapter, finally, discusses the future direction that I believe rock art studies in northern Mauritania (Berber rock art studies) needs to pursue.

Finally, The author has succeeded to show the recorded work not as isolated figures but as groups of interrelated figures, as well as introduce Mauritanian rock art to the readers, and show the significant role of this sort of archaeological material in studying the history of the region before the appearance of written records.