The Rock Carvings in Tanum, Sweden

Los grabados rupestres de Tanum, Suecia

Ulf Bertilsson

1 · Swedish Rock Art Research Archives University of Gothenburg
www.shfa.se

ABSTRACT

The rock carvings of Tanum are situated on granite outcrops surrounding the clayey lowlands of the Tanum plain. The area was settled around 6000 BC and the first rock carvings were made in the Late Neolithic about 2000 BC. There are 455 sites with close to 600 carved rocks, images surpassing 10,000, depicting ships, humans, footprints, animals, weapons, ornaments, chariots, circle-crosses, cup-marks and geometric designs.

No staffs are employed solely to manage the World Heritage site. However, many existing competences contribute i.e. Vitlycke museum perform tasks like a permanent exhibition, and an exhibition at the new rest area at the E6 highway. It arranges guided tours to the rock carvings during April-October and runs a Bronze Age farm with activities like school camps, etc. There is even a World Heritage preschool run by Tanum municipality.

The research of SHFA at the University of Gothenburg has to be officially affiliated since the interaction between research, management, and communication is a basic requirement for developing and strengthening the Tanum World Heritage in accordance with the UNESCO requirements.

Keywords
Rock carvings; Bronze Age; ships; animals; footprints; warriors; weapons; contour carved; research infrastructure; management council; museums; exhibitions; highway rest area; touch tech table computer; Source of Knowledge

RESUMEN

Los grabados rupestres de Tanum se localizan en rocas de granito que rodean las tierras bajas arcillosas de la llanura de Tanum. Las poblaciones humanas se establecieron en el área alrededor del 6000 a.C. y los primeros grabados fueron realizados en el Neolítico reciente, alrededor del 2000 a.C. Se conocen 455 enclaves con cerca de 600 rocas grabadas, y más de 10.000 motivos, que representan barcos, seres humanos, huellas de pies, animales, armas, ornamentos, carros, cruces enmarcadas en círculos, cazuelas y diseños geométricos.

No hay personal dedicado en exclusiva a la gestión del lugar Patrimonio de la Humanidad. Sin embargo, muchas instituciones con competencias contribuyen a ello, como el Museo Vitlycke que lleva a cabo tareas como la muestra permanente, y una exposición en el nuevo área de descanso de la autopista E6. Organiza visitas guiadas a los grabados entre abril y octubre y mantiene una granja de la Edad del Bronce con actividades tales como campamentos de verano, etc. Hay incluso una guardería preescolar centrada en el Patrimonio Mundial que es gestionada por el ayuntamiento de Tanum.

La investigación del SHFA en la Universidad de Goteborg tiene que ser oficialmente reconocido dado que la interacción entre la investigación, la gestión y la comunicación es un requisito básico para el desarrollo y fortalecimiento del Patrimonio Mundial de Tanum, de acuerdo con los requisimientos de la propia UNESCO.

Keywords
Grabados rupestres; Edad del Bronce; barcos; animales; podomorfos; guerreros; armamentos; contornos grabados; infraestructura de investigación; organismo de gestión; museos; exposiciones; área de descanso de la autopista; ordenador táctil de sobremesa; fuente de conocimiento

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1. PRESENTATION OF THE SITE

In the expert opinion of ICOMOS formulated by John Coles, an opinion being the basis for the World Heritage Committee’s decision, it was stipulated: “The rock carvings of Bohuslän are one of the treasures from the ancient world of the Nordic countries. Nowhere in the whole of Europe can such amount and variation in the vivid images carved into the rock surfaces be found.”

Location and composition

The carved rocks in the site are situated on outcrops at the foot of the partly moraine covered granite hills...
surrounding and overlooking the clayey lowlands of the Tanum plain. The area was settled around 8000 BP, the first rock carvings, depicting boats, being made in the Late Neolithic about 2000 BC. Today's mud flats were the shallow bays where ships could still sail. Within the area there are 455 sites with, in total, 594 carved rocks. The number of images exceeds 10,000 depicting humans, footprints, animals, boats, wagons, weapons, ornaments, circles, cup-marks and geometric designs. The combination with numerous scenes, duelling warriors, sex scenes and ploughing scenes made with outstanding technical and artistic quality, are unique not only in Europe but around the World. The site was inscribed onto the World Heritage List of UNESCO (Fig. 1).

History of the site

The earliest depiction, Carl Gustaf Gottfried Hilfelings' Indian ink drawing of a rock carving at Litsleby dates back to 1792, depicting a supernaturally large, 240 cm tall, anthropomorphic spear-carrier, often named “The Spear God” and supposedly a depiction of the Norse God “Odin”. The noble man, PerTham, living in Västergötland, commissioned Hilfeling then, but the original proposal to record antiquities in Tanum made by a colonel von Klinckowström in a letter to the Royal Office around 1750. Hilfeling depicted another three rock carvings and a passage grave named “Ludesten”. At that time, before the rock carvings were recognized as an important archaeological scientific substratum, the Spear God was in local folklore considered to picture a Scottish commander who, after a lost battle had been pursued to this rock face where he was killed and then petrified into the rock in the position in which fell (Fig. 2).

During 1815-1817, the son of the vicar in Tanum, Carl-Gustaf Brunius systematically recorded rock carvings in Tanum by Indian ink drawings using a grid system to depict the images on the panels correctly location and sizewise. A number of unfortunate circumstances, delayed the publication of Brunius’ work until 1868 when it had lost its original topicality and the ideas been overtaken by newer research by the scholars Lennart Åberg and Axel-Emmanuel Holmberg. Due to the dynamic development of Bronze Age research in the 1870s the Danish drawing master Lauritz Baltzer was hired for the task of implementing a complete and scientific documentation of the rock carvings. Also running
a print shop in Gothenburg, he could perform and control the entire process from the documentation in the field to the printed graphic reproduction.

A lasting impact of all these projects in the 19th century has been all the new discoveries continuously made since Brunius started this process in 1815. It is clear from the gradually increasing number of carvings that were documented by his followers. Baltzer documented 146 rock carvings, in comparison with Brunius 100, an increase of 46%. Oscar Almgren emanating from Baltzer’s documentation registered in turn 264 carvings or 118 more than Baltzer, an increase of 68%. In spite that, Baltzer’s documentation came to stand as the primary source for images of petroglyphs for more than a century. Its importance was manifested by that fact that the publication was being presented in a deluxe edition at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1889 (Fig. 3 & Fig. 4).

It was not until the 1970s that then new recording techniques, paper rubbing and plastic tracing were introduced. Plastic tracing was actually not common until the end of 1990s. In the late 1960s the Swedish National Heritage Board (NHB) in Stockholm started to take active part in the documentation. Now, for the first time, rock carvings were recognized in the national archaeological registry and incorporated in the Antiquities Act’s protective enclosures. Simultaneously, the NHB also began to use black-and-white photography regularly in documentation. In the 1990s the European Commission project Rock Care successfully tested the laser-scanning technique. However, the actual costs for this technology were very high. Today, this technology is re-introduced by the use of handheld optical red laser, although costs dropping considerably, they remain high compared to 3D-photography, like Structure from Motion (SfM), now used as a standard technology. The work led by Swedish Rock Art Research Archives and commissioned by the County Administration in Gothenburg (Fig. 5 & Fig. 6).

The World Heritage nomination process

The process of nominating the rock carvings in Tanum to the World Heritage List began in the mid-1980s at the Swedish National Heritage Board and in 1993 the nomination dossier was completed and sent to UNESCO in Paris. The World Heritage Committee approved the nomination at their meeting in December 1994 and inscribed the rock carvings in Tanum onto the World Heritage List (557nomination file Tanum).

On the WHC/UNESCO website it is described as follows: “The rock carvings in Tanum, in the north of Bohuslän, are a unique artistic achievement not only for their rich and varied motifs (depictions of humans and animals, weapons, boats and other subjects) but also for their cultural and chronological unity. They reveal the life and beliefs of people in Europe during the Bronze
Hällristningar i Tanums socken och Tanums härad
Rochers à glyphes de la paroisse de Tanum, arrondissement de Tanum.

Pl. 23 & 24.
Age and are remarkable for their large numbers and outstanding quality” (Fig.7).

2. THE ROCK ART IN THE SITE

Elements - Figure types

The ship is the most common representational figure while the cup-mark is the most common abstract one. The ships show specific details; extended fore and aft bows, from period II an onwards often adorned with horse heads; the crew checked with staffing lines, on rare occasions instead paddlers with real bodies; more rarely extended keel at the stern. The Early Bronze Age ships have inward fore and aft bows, while those from the Late Bronze Age have outwardly directed bows.

The second most common of the representational figure types are humans often depicted as warriors with weapons, mainly swords, axes and spears, often of identifiable type, possible to date to a specific period of the chronological scheme. It has often been argued that most of the weapons belong to period V, this is only partly true since there are also quite many that can be dated to the first two periods of the Early Bronze Age. Almost all male representations are phallic, and some have horns (Fig. 8).

Female representations are rare, marked by the hairstyle with ponytail and occurring, with few exceptions, supporting the sun disc at the top of the Aspeberget panel, only in processions and sex scenes (Fig. 9).

Human footprints are frequent, either depicting the naked foot, some with toes or the sandal, some dressed with heel-line. Footprints either facing up or down on the carving and sometimes sideways. They have been interpreted as signs of an invisible divinity. Some human images having one leg lifted and reclined probably indicating movement, possibly dance. Some other seems to run with giant steps.

The following quadrupeds: horse, deer, bull, wolf and dog is represented. Horses are often individually
depicted but may appear with riders or humans standing on their backs. A few times they appear as centaur. There are some few images of bestiality of man and cow or man and deer. Some birds and fish and a seal is imaged. Besides the weapons already mentioned there are also daggers and jewellery as neck rings and fibulae.

Circular discs and circle-crosses are common, single, in pair or associated with other images, like footprints and have been interpreted as representations of the Sun God. Sometimes circle-crosses represent the wheels of chariot or wagon as part of its construction. Regardless of which type, they are always depicted being empty (Fig. 10).

The cup-mark appears single or surrounded by a circle; in groups or lines occasionally forming larger patterns or, more rare, ships. Some are
placed on a human or a ship, indicating like a sort verb that the object does something actively like for example moves. Some researchers have interpreted the carvings as a language using semiotic theory and methodology. Carl Georg Brunius’ attempted to interpret the petroglyphs in Tanum inspired by Champollions concurrent research on the hieroglyphs in Egypt, but without achieving the same success. One image at Aspeberget with cup-marks arranged in four equally long lines of 7 have been suggested represent the Moon phases. Otherwise there are no lunar images known.

**Interpretation and meaning**

Oscar Montelius was the first to suggest that the rock carvings should be dated to the Bronze Age, in contrast to his predecessors that argued for varying dating; Brunius to the Stone Age since they were made using stone tools, Åberg to the Iron Age due to the expressions of sun-cult, and Holmberg to the Iron Age as being depiction of glorious sea-voyages and heroic deeds by the Northern peoples. Montelius was actually also the first to suggest that the rock carvings mirrored magical and religious beliefs linked to agriculture, but to which the key to
understanding was long lost. Oscar Almgren applied this theory in his famous treatise “Hällristningar och Kultbruk” published in 1928. A work having equally deep impact and long lasting effect on rock art interpretation as Baltzer’s images got on documentation. The main research focus changed from dating to interpretation lasting until the 1980s when spatial distribution and social structures became new research themes. In the late 1990s, the dating issue were to be reopened by Flemming Kaul using the typology of the ships on the rock carvings set in relation to that of ships engraved on bronze razors found in burials or similar contexts dated to any of the six periods of the Nordic Bronze Age (Fig. 11).

Technical design
The petroglyphs are carved directly with special pointed oval hammer stones of quartzite or any similar type of rock, or indirectly with a stone hammer and a chisel in stone, horn or flint. Metal chisels seem not to have been used. It is obvious that special artisans made images with great skills in processing the rock faces with the special technology required. Although, the majority of the rock carvings were produced during the Bronze Age and not during the Stone Age, which was claimed by Carl Georg Brunius, he was right in his claim that they were made with stone tools. His view was strongly influenced by the three periods system –
Figure 11 - Ship typology related to the Nordic Bronze Age chronological schedule of six periods proposed by Johan Ling (2008).

Measured ship depictions in relation to shore displacement. Ship images with inward turned prows dominate during the Early Bronze Age, about 1700–1100 BC, while outward turned prows ending up in animal heads are characteristic of the Late Bronze Age, 1100–500 BC, as are symmetrical ship images of the Pre Roman Iron Age, 500–200 BC. Ships in scale.
Stone, Bronze, Iron, then recently launched in the Nordic archaeology.

The majority of the images are contour carved with clearly marked lines, whether in the case of ships, humans or animals. Many ships have double lines, a top that marks the gunwale and a lower marking the keel. Many ships have completely carved hulls and many humans are also made this way, among others, the largest figure of all, the 240 cm tall, spear-armed “Odin” on Litsleby panel. Over-cuts, superimpositions, additions and updates are quite common making it possible to determine which image, part or portion of that is original and thus oldest.

Digital recording techniques, SfM and OLS, create better opportunities to analyse the carvings on a detailed level previously unthinkable. So, it has been discovered that the Litsleby spearhead have been re-cut up to four times, the first in period I of the Early Bronze Age and the last in period V of the Late Bronze Age, which means a period of about 1000 years. This is a good illustration to the long era during which the rock carvings have been in use and new images added continuously. On the Litsleby panel, the oldest ships are of the Nag-type from LN ca. 2000 BC and the youngest of the Hjortspring-type from the EIA ca. 400 BC, and thus at least 1600 years younger, while as Odin himself probably was carved in period V around 800 BC. It clearly shows that the practice of making petroglyphs was a persistent and important prehistoric tradition, and that the carved rocks for a long time functioned as central places where important community activities were being performed. The great interest of the carvings today from such diverse categories as researchers, tourists and educated public shows that the imagery of the Bronze Age society in Tanum still have great attractiveness. This was confirmed when the rock carvings were included on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1994 as a unique cultural heritage (Fig. 12).

Chronology and dating
The vast majority of the rock carvings in the World Heritage area were made during the Nordic Bronze Age in the period of time from 1700 to 500 BC, divided into six different periods by the Swedish archaeologist Oscar Montelius in the 1880s. Periods I – III constitute the Early Bronze Age (EBA) while periods IV – VI constitute the Late Bronze Age (LBA).

Fig. 13. The dating of the six periods of the Nordic Bronze Age. Beteckning = Designation, Tidsperiod = Era and f. Kr. = BC.

Montelius based his dating on the combinations of Bronze artefacts, which had been found in graves and depots.

Petroglyphs from all periods are richly represented in Tanum. However, the periods II and V constitute peaks in the carving traditions when especially many carvings were made. There were several reasons, one being the trade of metals and bronze objects...
developing strongly during this period. This is evident in the distinct and detailed depictions of bronze weapons and jewellery that appear on the carvings. The metal and its trading had various sources; initially Central Europe but gradually with increasing elements from the Mediterranean, as shown by the latest research on copper isotopes (Fig. 14).

As previously shown, there are carvings from both Late Neolithic (LN) and Early Iron Age (EIA,) the latter being relatively numerous. However, before BC the practice of making carvings seems to have ceased, although there are some isolated carvings from the Late Iron Age (LIA). The image composition is simplified, the artistic achievement and technical performance deteriorating during the later phases. The numerous ship images reflect its importance in sea transport and in religious beliefs. The carving of ships originated from the hunting cultures of Northern Scandinavia, i.e. the World Heritage site in Alta, Norway, beginning around 5000 BC, approx. 3000 years earlier than in Tanum. Conversely, characteristic elements from the Bronze Age culture in southern Scandinavia appear in the northern carvings. However, the rock carvings in Tanum have so many unique features that stands out making it a key area in which the various factors that lays behind this imagery transformed and merged into a new fantastic whole.

3. RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION

Research
The research history spans more than 200 years. Today’s research is buoyant, the petroglyphs attracting a steadily growing interest in universities. One reason for this is the advent of the Swedish Rock Art Research Archives (Swe. Svenskt Hällristnings
Forsknings Arkiv (SHFA)) as a national infrastructure for rock art documenta-
tion and research at the University of Gothenburg in 2007. SHFA financed by
the major national research funders: the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Founda-
tion, the Swedish Research Council and the Royal Academy of Letters.

An extensive archive material has been digitalised from a number of
institutions since the start in 2007. In November 2015 there were about
130,000 digital files of which approxi-
mately 12,000 are now available at the
SHFA web portal: www.shfa.se even in
English, Danish and soon Italian ver-
sion. The web portal and the database
have been developed including the
associated image registry and other
rock art information, and also linking to
the Swedish National Heritage Board’s
Formminnesinformationssystem/FMIS
(Eng. National Heritage Information) –
with associated map and the Swedish
National Heritage Board’s Open Cul-
tural Heritage and Europeana. The
portal has since the start in 2011 had
860,000 visitors, the number currently
increasing dramatically. Further, SHFA
has developed the research programs
“From peculiar antiquities for the
learned to cultural and world herit-
age for all” Ulf Bertilsson, and “Metals
on the Rocks” Johan Ling. Published
30 or so scholarly articles and three
books, and also created SHFA’S own
book series published by Oxbow
Books in Oxford.

Notwithstanding these positive
achievements, official linkage of research
to the World Heritage still lacks, research
not being represented among the issues
dealt with by the World Heritage Coun-
cil led by the County Chief Antiquarian.
SHFA is located to Vitlycke museum that
is performing most tasks of a visitor’s
centre, although yet not officially recog-
nized as such by its principal of the re-

gion of Västra Götaland. A collaboration
agreement has been signed between Vit-
lycke museum and SHFA, covering some
key aspects of which, however, few have
yet materialized.

An increasingly important area is the
application of digital documentation tech-
niques creating a number of synergies,
generating new research providing new
knowledge about rock carvings, but, in

Figure 14 · Bronze Age Warriors, the taller ca. 150 cm: s with a spearhead of Early Bronze Age
period IB type and the smaller wearing a scabbard with winged chape of Late Bronze Age period V
type on the Kalleby rock carving. Rubbing: Dietrich Evers
addition, forming techniques, which, unlike older and traditional ditto, are non-invasive and non-contact. This contributes to a new approach with less wear and tear on the rock faces which over the centuries have been repeatedly cleaned with crude tools and chemical substances and filled in with less appropriate paint.

Conservation

The conservation of the site has as almost a long history as the research and documentation. In particular, during the last century, a variety of more or less successful, techniques have been tested. A direct detrimental such is the cleaning with caustic soda used rather frequently over a 30-years period up to the late 1960s. The granite's sensitivity to chemical influences contributed in some places to irreparable damages. Fortunately, stopped this practice the negative effects becoming apparent.

Another example of a preservation measure is the still frequent practice of painting the images in red. The technology had long been used in rune stones as a mean to make the inscriptions clear and easier to decipher. On the rock carvings it was used extensively in the systematic documentation of rock carvings in Kville district in the 1930s. Then the aim was mainly to make the carvings more distinct when photographed and for that purpose painted by English red. In the early 1950s, this practice was taken over in order to make the images on the images more visible to the visiting tourists combined with the Swedish Tourist Association visit Signs. The first rock carving that was prepared like this was Litsleby. Visit Signs were now set up at the major rock carvings that eventually were equipped with wooden footbridges. The first rock carving endowed with this facility was Vitlycke in conjunction with the newly appointed King Carl XIV Gustaf’s visit there during his Eriksgata (Coronation trip) in 1972. The practice then spread on to other major carvings in Tanum (Fig. 15 & Fig. 16).
The painting of the images is now being closest to routinely repeated the colour fading and perceived as unclear. However, there are doubts whether it is consistent with good ethics and modern preservation standard using this technique. Internationally, there is a discussion on this, now slowly taking hold in Sweden. In the World Heritage site Alta in Finnmark, Norway this has resulted in proven technology removal of the red colour. The focus has shifted towards guided tours in natural light or aided by artificial light. Preliminary reports indicate that visitors experience the change as positive. Plans are to start experimenting the Alta model even in Tanum.

The inscription on the WHL meant major investments in management and preservation by the National Heritage Board and the County Administration. In the late 1980s the Air Pollution Project of SNHB conducted a damage inventory that enabled an assessment of the state of conservation based on detailed statistics on degree of weathering, damaging growth and exposure direction. More than 25% of the carvings were severely damaged by exfoliation of larger or smaller rock faces, harmful growths of lichens or rashness with acidic and harmful water, in some cases causing gravel weathering. The over flowing water was measured for conductivity and pH-value on the large carving on Aspeberget’s front occasionally being as low as 2.75. This was the result of an adverse combination of acid rain, salty sea winds and the systematic planting of spruce. The latter starting back in the late 1800s has contributed to lowering of the soil cover pH-value by up to 2 degrees. This has resulted in a general acidification that has negatively affected the chemical impact sensitive granite rocks.

On low concrete wall was built above the carving on Aspeberget to stop the flow of water. Then the carving was covered with insulation material of mineral wool and Plato mats to even out the temperature of the year and limit the number of times during the fall and spring when temperatures changes from plus degrees during the day and minus degrees at night. A phenomenon that in combination with water rashness, contributes greatly to weathering damages. Both measure having effect, the wall by stopping the water flow and the insulation by leading to temperature equalization. Like on a hot summer day in July 2000, a surface temperature of the insulation material above +50° C while the rock face under the insulation had a temperature of +18° C. Due to the effective measures taken, the gravel weathering of parts of Aspeberget has ceased and the cover therefore be removed during tourist season (Fig. 17).

Similar positive effects of the sheltering measures achieved in other carvings. A large carving on Aspebergets back had large areas with acute gravel weathering. A large carving on Aspebergets front occasionally being as low as 2.75. This was the result of an adverse combination of acid rain, salty sea winds and the systematic planting of spruce. The latter starting back in the late 1800s has contributed to lowering of the soil cover pH-value by up to 2 degrees. This has resulted in a general acidification that has negatively affected the chemical impact sensitive granite rocks.

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of SHFA on behalf of the CAB. No trace of gravel weathering was seen then. Since the conservation conditions have stabilized and a harmful external factor, the coniferous forests, have been harvested the carving remains uncovered. Instead, the rock face will be checked regularly with the help of digital high-resolution images that will enable detection of micro-level changes (Fig. 18 & Fig. 19).

4. MANAGEMENT OF THE SITE

Management organization

The revised organizational structure and a change in work process were introduced in 2011 after a period of reviewing, clarifying roles and responsibilities. Its overall objectives are:

Continuous development of preservation, documentation and enforcement.

Figure 17 · The concrete wall and the sheltering insulation cover on the Aspeberget rock carving. Source: SHFA. Photo: Catarina Bertilsson
SUPERVISORY BOARD
• Composition: Two representatives of each Party. A secretary that coordinates the Council's activities.
• Role / Responsibilities: Coordinates, prioritizes and initiates actions / activities and monitors the management plan. Appoints principal for each focus area and determines the focus areas' action plans.
• Work form: at least one meeting per year.

MANAGEMENT MODEL
• Party Compound management - County Board, Västra Götaland and Tanum.
• The parties represent different aspects of the World Heritage.
• The parties are jointly responsible for the annually conducted various efforts of the World Heritage.
• The parties are jointly responsible for the costs arising from activities, efforts and actions performed in the World Heritage.

BASIC QUESTION
Are all values that constitute the World Heritage - from the landscape entirely to the individual rock carvings - covered and protected or are further efforts needed?

Resources – funding and staffing
The appropriations will vary depending on the actions and efforts in a given year. There is a core funding
from the CAB that previously amounted to ca. SEK 1 million that is now lower due to general reductions in state appropriations. The funding covers part of the documentation, preservation and public presentation. But for the documentation co-funding from the University of Gothenburg is required. At the same time finishing the appropriations for specific actions such as the rest area by the E6 that opened in the summer of 2015 with targeted information about the rock carvings and the World heritage. The Swedish Transport Administration funded buildings and earthworks, while World Heritage Council parties shared the remaining costs.

There are no staffs employed to specifically manage the World Heritage site. However, there are many people, especially on Vitlycke museum, performing tasks related to this task. This applies, for example, antiquarian staff producing the basis for the two exhibitions there are; the museum’s permanent exhibition, which a small portion is about World Heritage; exhibition at the new rest area at the E6 focussing entirely on the World Heritage. Beyond that, there are a large number of guided tours to the petroglyphs led by seasonal employees during April-October when the museum is open. There is also a Bronze Age farm with various buildings and activities like school camps, etc. In addition, there is a World Heritage preschool run by the municipality but with staff including from the regional cultural heritage management (Fig. 20).
Other visitor facilities and equipment

In the large entrance hall of the museum SHFA has placed a large Touch Tech Table computer, the “Source of Knowledge” with a variety of applications that features scientific facts and new knowledge based on current research for the visiting audience. Facts and knowledge that are otherwise largely absent at the museum instead dominated by an exhibition based on a fictional Bronze Age story primarily targeting children and young people. This may seem paradoxical, because a large and growing proportion of visitors coming from other European countries belonging to upper age groups, especially so-called whoopies, often asking for information based on concrete facts. The initiative of SHFA with the touch tech table computer has attracted great interest in all age groups.

There is yet another museum Tanums Hällristningsmuseum Underslös (THU) located in an old school building and run by a private foundation. The museum is open for two months during the summer, has a small exhibition of petroglyphs and provides guided tours and especially appreciated those with artificial lights evenings. THU organizes annually documentation seminar and publishes a magazine, Adoranten.

SHFA arranges annual university courses, including an international master course in rock art documentation and interpretation, where students are trained in digital documentation techniques on the petroglyphs within the World Heritage area. Furthermore SHFA plans to, in cooperation with Vitlycke museum, setting a World Archive for Rock Art in a new building.

At the museum there is a gift shop with attractive products and a restaurant that has been operated in changing forms of various actors. Since 2015 a private contractor runs it under new management, Ida’s restaurant, which has been very successful and multiplied the number of guests, also includes locals.

5. TOURISM

Tanum is traditionally a very popular destination, annual visitor numbers in excess of a quarter of a million. The main attractions like an exciting coastal and archipelago inviting to swimming and boating activities along with fish and seafood of extraordinary quality. The World Heritage rock carvings are important parts of this. Vitlycke museum has had about 100,000 visitors annually in recent years, but in 2015 there was a sharp increase to 126,000 visitors. A steadily growing percentage of visitors are “whopies” seeking qualified information and targeted experiences. THU has several thousand visitors annually with a certain but clear decline since Vitlycke museum introduced free admission. The World Heritage Council has set a target to double the number of visitors within a certain number of years.

World Heritage visiting is promoted partly by the local organization Tanum tourism but also nationally and internationally by the Västra Götaland region’s tourism organization. One obvious effect of this is a steadily increasing share of foreign tourists. A local group of landowners with rock carvings on their land has formed a non-profit association “Hiking in the World Heritage”, which manages a 6 km long trail with rock carvings.

Results and perspectives

The World Heritage has a well-developed management organization led by the County Administrative Board that covers most of the field of activity and current issues. The commitment of Tanum municipality and efforts makes local connection and appreciation of the World Heritage ever stronger. The region provides important contributions, mainly through Västarvet and Vitlycke Museum. Gothenburg University contributes by SHFA to deeper scientific foundation that strengthens World Heritage legitimacy. So far, future-prospects seem fairly bright. The new rest area at the E6 road of the Swedish Transport Administration and the new shopping centre in Tanum will contribute to more visitors. But there are also deficiencies in the organization that needs to be changed in order to maximize the development potential; Vitlycke museum needs to change status into a proper visitor’s centre; business needs a reorientation to meet the resource-rich upper age groups’ wishes and needs; the affiliation of the research of SHFA at the University of Gothenburg should be made official since the interaction between research, management, and communication is a basic requirement for developing and strengthening Tanum World Heritage in accordance with the UNESCO requirements.

6. RECOMMENDED READINGS


Source for all figures is: SHFA (Swedish Rock Art Research Archives) – www.shfa.se except for figures 1 and 2 where the source is: Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland.