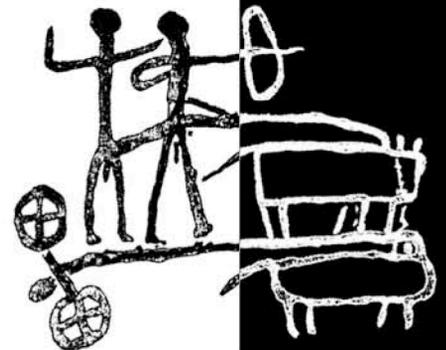


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RESEARCH
on
ROCK ART
in
SOUTH-ISRAEL
TIMNA-VALLEY



by
StoneWatch
Photos: Josef Rahm Otto
and Beno Rothenberg
Drawings: Hartmut Lettow
and Beno Rothenberg



Photo by J. Otto, drawing by Beno Rothenberg

The basic theme of Engraving VII is an arrangement of four-spoked, manned chariots. The chariots are drawn having rear-positioned wheels, but without a sidescreen. The draught animals, which seem to be oxen, are harnessed to the front of the pole and appear to wear some kind of yoke. One or two armed men are standing on the floor of each chariot. Some of the charioteers carry a round-topped or circular shield or a bow, whilst almost all the occupants hold a typical Egyptian New Kingdom battle-axe in their raised hand and have a short, hilted dagger. To keep free the hands of the charioteer, the reins are tied around his waist, a fashion well-known from New Kingdom wall-paintings and also from the Ugarit gold patera dating to the late fifteenth or early fourteenth centuries BC. All occupants of the chariots and the round-headed, battle-axe carrying men standing before them, wear a loin cloth, folded into a pointed apron in front. The artist carefully drew the details of this fashion typical of the Egyptian soldier of the New Kingdom, as can be seen, for instance, on the reliefs of Queen Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el-Bahri.

In the upper centre of the panel we meet men of a different type, their bodies drawn as two long parallel lines to indicate their larger size. These men seem to be wearing some kind of helmet, carry long, hilted, straight-bladed swords, and wear tasseled kilts. This part of the engraving, contrary to the chariot array, is populated by various animals: we have here ibexes, some ostriches, dogs and several representatives of the straight-horned oryx (*oryx leucoryx*). The latter has so far not been found in any rock drawing in the area and a small number of this desert antelopes are known still to exist in South Arabia. The dogs seem to chase the animals and one of the hunters has just sent an arrow after an ibex. In the lowest part of the picture, next to the third chariot from the right, appears a horse with a rider (?) on its back. The group of barely discernible scratching in the upper left corner of the engraving, badly copying some of the figures of the original drawing, is an addition, probably later, made in red and by rubbing with a blunt implement. The solitary figure on the extreme right is incised on a different plane of the rock, and may have been added here by the people that engraved the first rock-drawing. A later hand tried to 'improve' on the general layout of the engraving and peeked a kind of sloping surface through part of the picture: they also added an unidentified, peeked object near the middle of the picture.

Essentially, Engraving VII seems to contain two different main themes, each with its own and differing "actors". The ox-drawn chariot groups, manned by battle-axe brandishing charioteers, could not possibly reflect any real local event, neither fighting nor hunting; they seem to represent a processional array with some cult or magic significance. Right underneath Engraving VII were found several large bowls made of very soft white sandstone, broken by rocks that fell from above. These bowls, alike those which were not found anywhere else in the mining areas or in the smelting camps of Timna, could not have served any metallurgical purpose because of their extreme softness. Yet similar bowls or basins were found in the Egyptian mining temple at Timna, apparently used there in a ritual context. A quantity of sherds and bowls found in the canyon near the engraving belong, like the Timna Temple, to the XIXth and XXth Dynasties.

The second theme of Engraving VII, concentrated in its centre, seems to be a hunt, with men and dogs chasing ibexes, ostriches and antelopes. It is obvious that the artists intended to differentiate between the Egyptian charioteers and the tall, tassel-kilted hunters. These hunters may be identified with the Shosu of the Egyptian sources, perhaps here the Midianites, inhabitants of southern Transjordan and the Hedjaz. A date in the XIXth to XXth Dynasties for Engraving 2 fits well with the date proposed for Engraving VI. Besides, pottery of this period found in the rubble underneath Engraving I should, by all the evidence, be contemporary with the mining shafts found next to it.

These shafts are known to belong to the Egyptian mining enterprises of Timna, dated by the Timna Temple to this period, the end of the fourteenth to the middle of the twelfth centuries BC. Whether the human figures on Engraving VI represent people ethnically different from the two human types of Engraving VII and therefore a third ethnic factor, perhaps the Amalekites from the Central Negev mountains, known also to have worked in the Timna mines at the same time, is difficult to ascertain.

The strange copy of the chariot on Engraving I seems to indicate that Engraving VII must have been either earlier than or at least contemporary with Engraving VI, and the date proposed for both rock-engravings seems to be well established and their votive character plausible.

Timna-Valley and his roads



different places of the Timna Valley

photo by Josef Otto

Timna-Valley and his roads



photo by Josef Otto

Timna-Valley and his Coppermines



photo by Josef Otto

Timna and his mines and tools

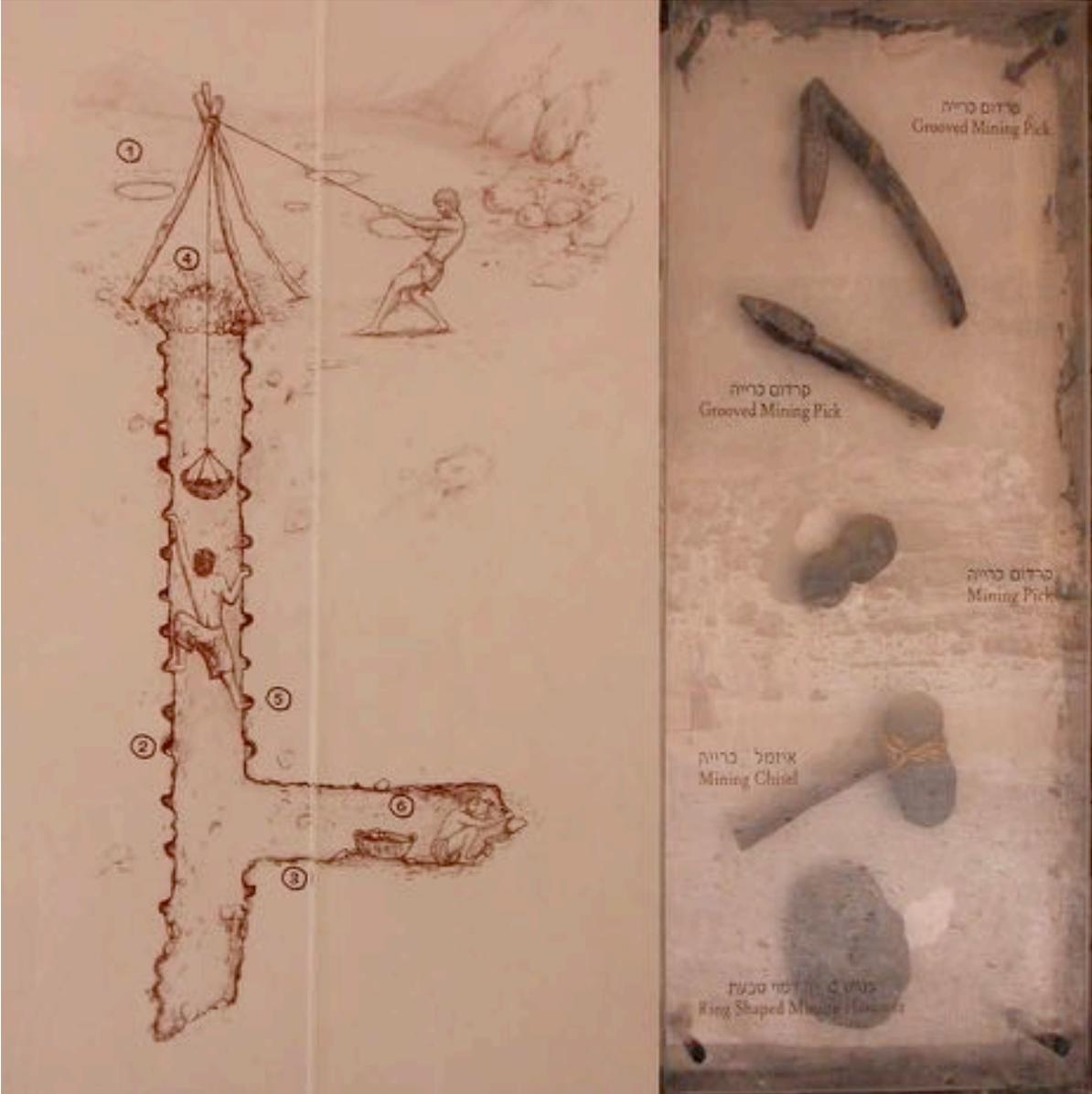


photo by Josef Otto

The mineral wealth of ancient Timna



photo by Josef Otto

Near Eastern fieldwork in mining archaeology and archaeometallurgy began at Timna and Wadi Amram in the 1960s and 1970s. For the first time, Bronze Age copper mines were excavated and cleared and importance was given to the slag recovered. At both sites copper was produced for over 5000 years, from the Chalcolithic to the Mamluk periods. Although the broad outlines of technical development can be traced, much remains to be learned in future studies.

Timna Mines



View to southeast



Timna Slave Hill

Photos by Beno Rotenberg