

= Twyfelfontein =

Twyfelfontein (Afrikaans : uncertain spring) , officially known as ?Ui @-@ ?Ais (Damara / Nama : jumping waterhole) , is a site of ancient rock engravings in the Kunene Region of north @-@ western Namibia . It consists of a spring in a valley flanked by the slopes of a sandstone table mountain that receives very little rainfall and has a wide range of diurnal temperatures .

The site has been inhabited for 6 @,@ 000 years , first by hunter @-@ gatherers and later by Khoikhoi herders . Both ethnic groups used it as a place of worship and a site to conduct shamanist rituals . In the process of these rituals at least 2 @,@ 500 items of rock carvings have been created , as well as a few rock paintings . Displaying one of the largest concentrations of rock petroglyphs in Africa , UNESCO approved Twyfelfontein as Namibia 's first World Heritage Site in 2007 .

= = History = =

Twyfelfontein valley has been inhabited by Stone @-@ age hunter @-@ gatherers of the Wilton stone age culture group since approximately 6 @,@ 000 years ago . They made most of the engravings and probably all the paintings . 2 @,@ 000 to 2 @,@ 500 years ago the Khoikhoi , an ethnic group related to the San (Bushmen) , occupied the valley , then known under its Damara / Nama name ?Ui @-@ ?Ais (jumping waterhole) . The Khoikhoi also produced rock art which can clearly be distinguished from the older engravings .

The area was uninhabited by Europeans until after World War II , when a severe drought caused white Afrikaans speaking farmers (Boers) to move in . The farm was later procured by the apartheid government as part of the Odendaal Plan and became part of the Damaraland bantustan . The white settlers left in 1965 .

Topographer Reinhard Maack , who also discovered the White Lady rock painting at Brandberg , reported the presence of rock engravings in the area in 1921 . A more thorough investigation was only conducted after David Levin studied the feasibility of farming in 1947 . He rediscovered the spring but struggled to extract enough water to sustain his family and his herd . Slowly becoming obsessed with doubts about the capacity of the spring an Afrikaans @-@ speaking friend began calling him David Twyfelfontein (David Doubts @-@ the @-@ spring) in jest . When Levin bought the land and registered his farm in 1948 he gave it the name Twyfelfontein . While commonly being translated as doubtful spring , a more accurate translation for the word twyfel is therefore " questionable " or " uncertain " .

In 1950 scientific investigation of the rock art started with an investigation by Ernst Rudolph Scherz who described over 2500 rock engravings on 212 sandstone slabs . Today it is estimated that the site contains more than 5000 individual depictions .

= = Location and description = =

Twyfelfontein is situated in the Huab valley of the Mount Etjo formation in southern Kunene Region of Namibia , an area formerly known as Damaraland . The rocks containing the art work are situated in a valley flanked by the slopes of a sandstone table mountain . An underground aquifer on an impermeable layer of shale sustains a spring in this otherwise very dry area . The name Twyfelfontein refers to the spring itself , to the valley containing the spring , and in the context of traveling and tourism also to a greater area containing nearby tourist attractions : the rock engravings , the Organ Pipes (Namibia) , Burnt Mountain , Doros crater , and the Petrified Forest . The World Heritage Site covers the area of rock engravings .

The area is a transitional zone between semi desert , savanna , and shrubland and receives less than 150 mm (5 @. @ 9 in) annual rainfall . Diurnal temperatures vary from 10 to 28 ° C (50 to 82 ° F) in the winter month of July and 21 to 35 ° C (70 to 95 ° F) in the summer month of November .

Twyfelfontein lies 20 km (12 mi) south of the C39 major road from Sesfontein to Khorixas . From there it is connected by the district road D3214 . The Twyfelfontein Country Lodge features a gravel airstrip . The lodge , camp site , visitor 's centre and most of the other tourist facilities are managed

as a joint venture between the lodge owners and the Twyfelfontein @-@ Uibasen Conservancy .
The rock art area consists of fourteen smaller sites that have been introduced by Scherz in his initial site survey . They are still used to describe the location of artworks in Twyfelfontein :

= = Artworks = =

Sandstone rocks at Twyfelfontein are covered by the so @-@ called desert varnish , a hard patina that appears brown or dark grey . Engravings were effected by chiseling through this patina , exposing the lighter rock underneath . The indentations were created over the course of thousands of years . The oldest engravings might be as old as 10 @,@ 000 years , and the creation of new works probably ended by the arrival of pastoral tribes around 1000 AD . Three different types of engravings can be distinguished at Twyfelfontein :

iconic imagery (images of animals , humans , and fantasy creatures)

pictograms (geometric rock art like pecked circles , rows of dots)

indentations for or from everyday use (grinding hollows , board games , gong stones)

Additionally , the site contains rock paintings at 13 different locations , with depictions of humans painted in red ochre in six rock shelters . The similar occurrence of rock paintings and rock engravings is very rare .

The hunter @-@ gatherers made most of the iconic engravings and probably all the paintings . The carvings represent animals such as rhinoceroses , elephants , ostriches and giraffes as well as depictions of human and animal footprints . Some of the figures , most prominently the " Lion Man " ? a lion with an extremely long rectangular kinked tail ending in a six @-@ toed pugmark ? depict the transformation of humans into animals . This transformation and the depiction of animals together with their tracks make it likely that they were created as part of shamanist rituals . The more simplistic perception that they only show hunter @-@ gatherers ' attempts to acquire food is now thought to be naïve .

Engravings of animals that certainly never occurred in this area , like a sea lion , penguins , and possibly flamingos indicate that the hunter @-@ gatherers might have had contact with the coast more than 100 km (62 mi) away . A modern archaeological survey led by Sven Ouzman questions these descriptions of Scherz ' initial investigation and describes the not easily recognisable fauna as " strange animals " ? rough work of animals , possibly giraffe , that did occur at Twyfelfontein .

The Khoikhoi herders produced the geometric imagery , probably depicting herder groups . They are also the creators of the more worldly indentations in that area that served as grinding hollows and game boards . Some of the stones bear marks from use as gong stones ; they make unusual sounds when hit .

= = Archaeology = =

The archaeological name of the site is Twyfelfontein 534 . It is subdivided into 15 smaller sites as described by Scherz in 1975 . Objects from the site include a variety of stone tools made mostly from quartzite . Type and shape of these tools indicate not only the use on rock but also the prevalence of wood and leather working . Artwork such as pendants and beads from ostrich eggshell fragments have been found at several places . Of the items of daily use charcoal and bone fragments have been excavated as well as undecorated pottery fragments , although the pottery might have originated from early farmers rather than the Stone Age culture that produced the rock art .

The archaeological value of the site does not compare with its importance as rock art collection . The findings do , however , support the shamanist origin of the engravings because food remains from the site proved to be bones of small antelope , rock dassie and even lizards rather than the large species depicted .

= = Site protection and recognition = =

On 15 Aug 1952 the area was declared a National Monument by the South @-@ West African administration . Despite its early recognition , the site was left unguarded until 1986 when the entire area was declared a nature reserve . As a result , many of the petroglyphs were damaged or removed . Additionally , visitors have left their own graffiti on the sandstone slabs .

Under Namibian legislation , the site is protected under Section 54 of the National Heritage Act . In 2007 , UNESCO approved Twyfelfontein as Namibia 's first World Heritage Site as one of the largest concentrations of rock petroglyphs in Africa . The organisation recognised " a coherent , extensive and high quality record of ritual practices relating to hunter @-@ gather communities [...] over at least two millennia " (criterion iii) , and " links between ritual and economic practices in the apparent sacred association of the land adjacent to an aquifer " according to criterion V of the cultural selection criteria . Twyfelfontein was Namibia 's only World Heritage Site until 2013 when the Namib Sand Sea was listed .

To achieve having the site listed by UNESCO , the government of Namibia defined a buffer zone of 91 @. @ 9 km² (35 @. @ 5 sq mi) to protect the visual setting . In the 0 @. @ 6 km² (0 @. @ 2 sq mi) core site , grazing is restricted and the establishment of tourism facilities is prohibited . Although Twyfelfontein is regarded as " generally intact " , the Twyfelfontein Country Lodge within the " Zeremonienplatz " (Place of Ceremonies) rock engraving site in the buffer zone is of concern to UNESCO , who stated " This has severely compromised the integrity of the rock engravings in this area . " The hiking trail allowed visitors unsupervised access and is seen as running too close to many of the rock @-@ art sites . Site management has , however , improved since applying for World Heritage status , particularly with regards to visitor management ; unsupervised hiking is no longer allowed .

= = = Literature = = =

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