

SECTION 4

Good afternoon, everyone!

This is the first seminar in preparation for our archaeological fieldwork in Namibia; we are fantastically lucky to have received partial research funding for this trip from our Institute, so I shall expect 200% attention and participation from you all. First in this seminar, I'm going to give a brief introduction to contemporary research on rock art, and in the second part I'm going to give you some do's and don'ts for our fieldwork trip in April – so please Q31 listen very carefully.

I'm first going to focus on the interpretation of rock art in Namibia. We are very fortunate to be going to an area where you can find some of the most important sites in the entire world. And I hope to show you how easy it is for everyone to make mistakes in looking at cultures which are different from our own – the first and most important lesson we have to learn.

In Namibia there are both paintings and engravings – that's where the surface of the rock is cut out. Many of the engravings show footprints of animals and most scholars used to think that the purpose of these was simple and obvious: this rock art was like a school book with pictures to teach children about tracks: which track belonged to which animal – giraffe, lion Q32 and so on.

But there were some mysteries. First, when you look at a typical Namibian painting or engraving, you see the tracks are repeated, there are dozens of tracks for the same animal. Q33 You'd expect just one clear illustration if the reason – the aim – was to teach tracking.

Now there were two more problems. Why are some of the engravings of animals *very* accurate as you'd expect – all clearly identifiable – and others quite unrealistic?

And another mystery – some of these *unrealistic* animals – that's in the engravings – seem to be half human. Some, for example, have got human faces. Many researchers now think Q34 that these were pictures the wise men engraved of themselves. They believed they could use Q35 magic to control the animals they had drawn, so the hunters could then catch them for food.

This shows you some of the dangers of coming from one culture to another, as we'll be doing, without understanding it fully. Scholars imagined that children looked at rock art pictures to learn to track – just because they themselves had learnt skills from pictures; many researchers now believe that rock art had a much more complex purpose. And we'll talk more about it next week!

Now before I invite you to join in a discussion in this second part of the seminar, I'd like to make some very important points about our fieldwork – and in fact any field trip to look at rock art.