

CHONGONI WORLD HERITAGE ROCK ART SITE MALAWI





The project was supported by the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. Since its creation in 2000, the AFCP has provided financial support to more than 640 cultural preservation projects in over 100 countries. The Department of Antiquities and TARA would like to recognize the American people and the U.S. Government for their commitment to preserving the rock art heritage of Africa.



Department of Antiquities, Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Culture
P.O. Box 264, Lilongwe, Malawi. Tel/Fax +265 1 758 421



TRUST FOR AFRICAN ROCK ART

P.O. Box 24122, Nairobi 00502, Tel: +(254) 20 884467/883735,
Fax: +(254) 20 883674,
Email: tara@africanrockart.org, www.africanrockart.org
ISBN 9966-7453-3-5

Photos © David Coulson / TARA unless credited otherwise.
Text: Gloria Borona, Medson Makuru and David Coulson.
Coordination: Terry Little
Design & Layout by Richard Wachara



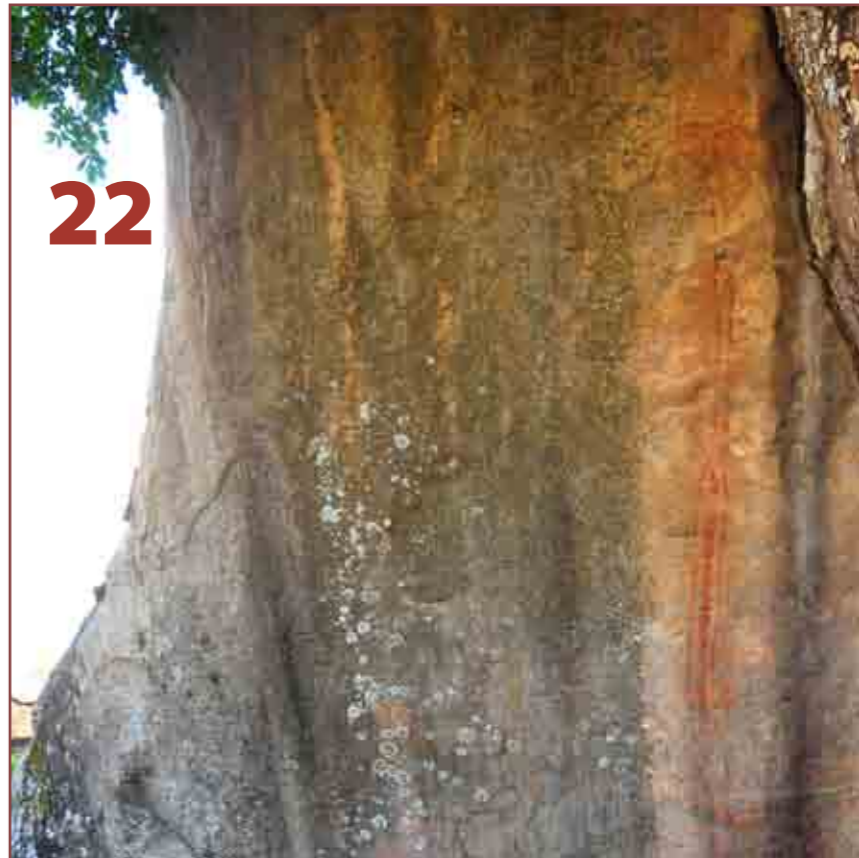
Cover Pictures

Main picture: View out from Chongoni Mountain towards Dedza Mountain
Insert: Chewa white painting at Chentcherere 2

CONTENTS



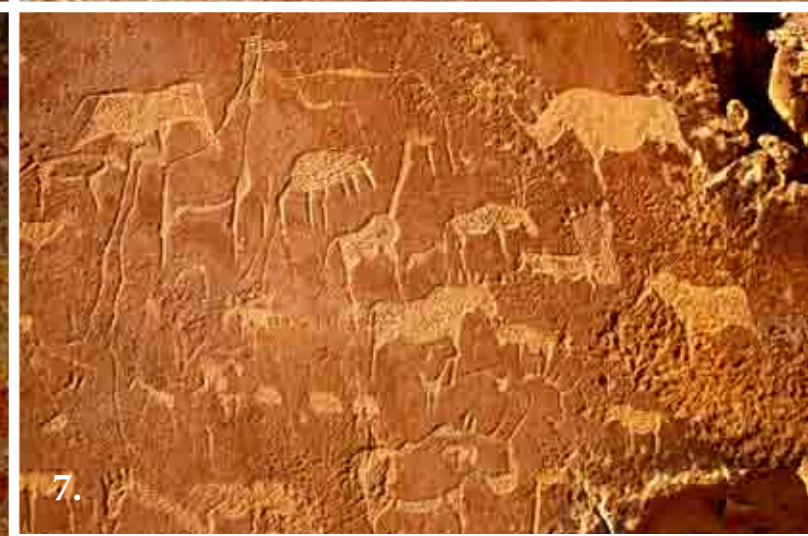
Introduction to African Rock Art.....	1
Annan/Mandela statements	3
About TARA.....	4
Department of Antiquities, Malawi.....	5
Chongoni World Heritage Site.....	6
Chongoni Community Rock Art Project...	7
Chentcherere Sites.....	9
Namzeze Site.....	15
Mphunzi Sites	19
Phanga La Ngoni Site.....	29
Chongoni Mountain site.....	33
Diwa Sites.....	37
Nsama Wa'ngombe Site.....	41
Conservation.....	43
Rock art visitors Code of Conduct.....	44
Chongoni World Heritage Site Map.....	45
Other regional attractions.....	46



Introduction to African Rock Art

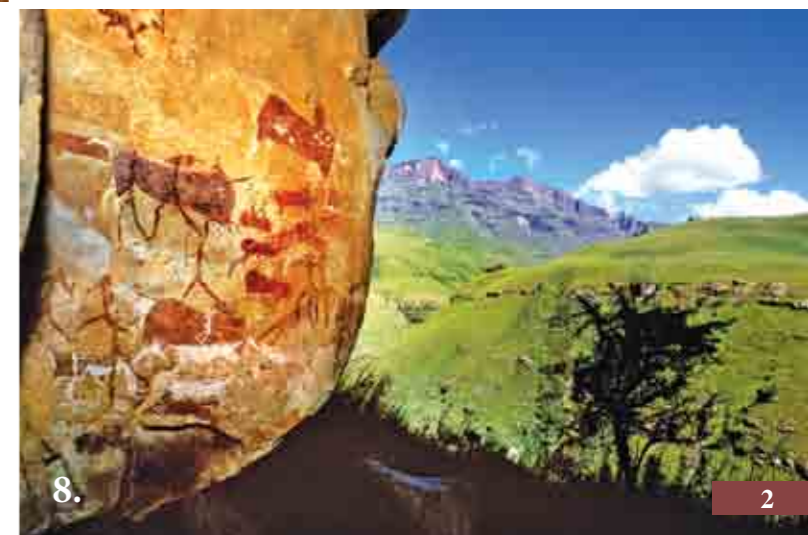
A long time ago, all over the world, people used to paint and carve pictures into the natural rock in the areas they lived. In Africa, the pictures mainly represented animals and people, and also designs. Very rarely the artists painted plants; they never drew hills and rivers. The perspective, the way the images are placed in what may be scenes, is different from what we would draw today.

The earliest pictures that we can still see today may be as much as 10,000 years old. When you look at pictures in this booklet, remember that those ancient artists could not read or write as we do today. It makes us wonder how they could draw so accurately and engrave with such care. We must also remember that rock art painting and engravings were an early form of communication, because the artists were telling their communities about how they saw their world. This art is our heritage, a part of our roots in this land.



1. South Eastern Algeria is one of the richest rock art areas in Africa. The Tassili n'Ajjer is the most famous of these and is a World Heritage Site and a trans-frontier site with Libya's Acacus Mountains.
2. Morocco has many rock engraving sites, especially in the south and south east. Some engravings could be at least 5000 years old.
3. Kenya has a number of important sites, most of them engraving sites located in the north. The best known of Kenya's sites is Kakapel, a national monument.
4. Tanzania has hundreds of rock art sites, some of which may be thousands of years old. Kondoa, a World Heritage Site, is located in central Tanzania at the western edge of the Rift Valley.

5. Zimbabwe has a huge number of rock art sites including some of the world's most interesting and beautiful rock paintings. It has a World Heritage rock art site - Matobo.
6. Botswana's principal site is the Tsodilo Hills in North Western Botswana - a World Heritage site.
7. Namibia has a huge amount of rock art scattered across a vast area, most of it rock engravings. It has a World Heritage rock art site - Twyfelfontein, in the north west part of the country. Another very important site is the Brandberg Massif.
8. South Africa is famous for its Bushman/San rock paintings and has very large numbers of painting and engraving sites scattered across the country. It has a World Heritage rock art site - the Ukhambula Drakensberg National Park.





Kofi Annan and Mandela Statements

"Africa's rock art is the common heritage of all Africans, but it is more than that. It is the common heritage of humanity."

– **President Nelson Mandela**

"The rock art of Africa makes up one of the oldest and most extensive records on earth of human thought. It shows the very emergence of the human imagination. It is a priceless treasure. And it is irreplaceable. But Africa's rock art is not just about the distant past. It is about today and tomorrow as well. Scientists, historians, artists and students must be able to study and understand its significance for decades and centuries to come. It is time for Africa's leaders to take a new and more active role. We must save this cultural heritage

before it is too late. Two initiatives are especially critical: educating our children, and engaging local communities. To Africa's children I would like to say, You are the future of Africa. Study your proud history, and protect Africa's rock art. I would also like to ask private businesses, foundations and individuals to contribute their expertise and resources. We at the United Nations will continue to do our part. Finally, I am pleased to join my dear friend Nelson Mandela in supporting TARA, the Trust for African Rock Art, in its work to preserve this vital cornerstone of our world's cultural heritage."

– **Kofi Annan, Secretary-General United Nations**

About TARA

TARA, the Trust for African Rock Art, was founded in 1996 by photographer David Coulson under the patronage of renowned archaeologist, Mary Leakey, and author/conservationist, Laurens van der Post.

Based in Nairobi, Kenya, TARA is committed to recording the rich rock art heritage of the entire African continent, to making this information widely available and accessible and, to the extent possible, safeguarding those sites most threatened by both humans and nature, no matter how remote.

TARA achieves this through survey and conservation work, documentation, exhibitions, publications and community projects. TARA has documented rock art in 16 African countries and digitised 10,000 images that are now available online. It is estimated that over one million people have visited TARA's exhibitions in 12 countries. The organisation also works closely with communities in areas where rock art is found, in order to raise awareness of rock art as a fragile heritage resource, and to improve the lives of people in those communities.

Mission

To create greater global awareness of the importance and endangered state of African rock art; survey sites; monitor status; be an information resource and archive; and promote and support rock art conservation measures.



Head and neck of a life size giraffe in Northern Niger (Sahara)

Department Of Antiquities

The Malawi Department of Antiquities was established in 1967 by an Act of Parliament with the mandate to study, preserve, conserve and protect the immovable cultural heritage of Malawi and the associated cultural values and natural environment for posterity, educational, scientific, recreational and socio-economic growth of the communities around the heritage sites in particular and Malawi as a nation in general. The Act was revised in June, 1990.

To achieve its goals, the Department's activities are grouped under three major programs: Prehistoric research, Monument and Education /Out reach program. The objective of Prehistoric program is to recover information on Malawi's prehistory. The fields of interest include systematic research in archaeology, paleontology, geoarchaeology, zoo-archaeology, rock art, and others. These provide information on past human existence and the environments in which he existed. The major discoveries in this program include a dinosaur named Malawisaurus in Karonga which is believed to be 65 million years old and is currently displayed at Karonga Museum; and also a Hominid, which is believed to be 2.5 million years old and many archaeological sites across the country whose results have led to more than twelve Antiquities publications.

The monuments Program involve the identification of monuments and also historical research to ascertain their significance, routine inspection of monuments which allow detection of disrepair and prompt remedial measures to be taken such as rehabilitation and maintenance of monuments. Replication of cultural materials for study, distribution and sale, setting up of Site Museums for certain cultural materials to be displayed in situ; and the protection of movable cultural items, such as archaeological artifacts and palaeontological specimens from illicit exportation. In the Monuments program the Department has declared nineteen structures as protected national monuments throughout the country.

The Education /Outreach Program is accomplished through publication of research findings, monument brochures and tourist guides to monuments; display of cultural materials; lectures to schools, colleges and the general public; guided tours to monuments and the operation of a small Department library.

Detail of human figure at one of the Chongoni sites



Above. View of Chongoni Mountain from near the village of Hinda

Chongoni World Heritage Site

Background information

The Chongoni rock art World Heritage Site was inscribed on the World Heritage list in 2006 by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. Chongoni has both red and white painting sites as well as bichrome (red and white) paintings superimposed. These paintings, some of them centuries or more old, are a unique form of cultural heritage which are exclusive to Malawi. This small area, most of which was once forest, contains almost as many rock art sites as have been recorded in the whole of Malawi (Smith 1997). So far 127 rock art sites have been located and recorded in the cluster of gneiss hills, covering an area of 126.6 square kilometers; and some in the nearby hills of Mphunzi, Nthulu, Chingwenembe and the Banda Hills.

Most sites contain red, schematic designs, some enhanced with white in-fills or tiny white dots, and a few at Namzeze are polychrome (red, yellow and white). These paintings are attributed to Abatwa (Akafula), hunter-gatherers who disappeared in the mid 19th century. All sites contain Late White paintings made by Chewa people and used in their rite-of-passage ceremonies. Those painted in flat white (and very rarely in black) by women for chinamwali ceremonies usually depict reptile-like zoomorphs. The other Late Whites, also painted in flat white and by men for nyau ceremonies, depict animals, mythical animals, people and even motor cars.

Chongoni Community Rock Art Project

Pictures courtesy of Department of Antiquities Malawi

"Heritage without community involvement and commitment is an invitation to failure. Heritage protection, should, wherever possible, reconcile the needs of human communities, as humanity needs to be at the heart of conservation."
UNESCO Convention on Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage



1. Community Engagers Workshop at Chentcherere 2

2. Youth Camp group at Chentcherere 2

3. Meeting at the Chief's office

4. Production of Crafts

5. Chongoni World Heritage Rock Art Site signboard

6. Community Sensitization meeting

7. Cleaning graffiti at Chentcherere 2

8. Tour guide training

Chentcherere Sites

Open to the public

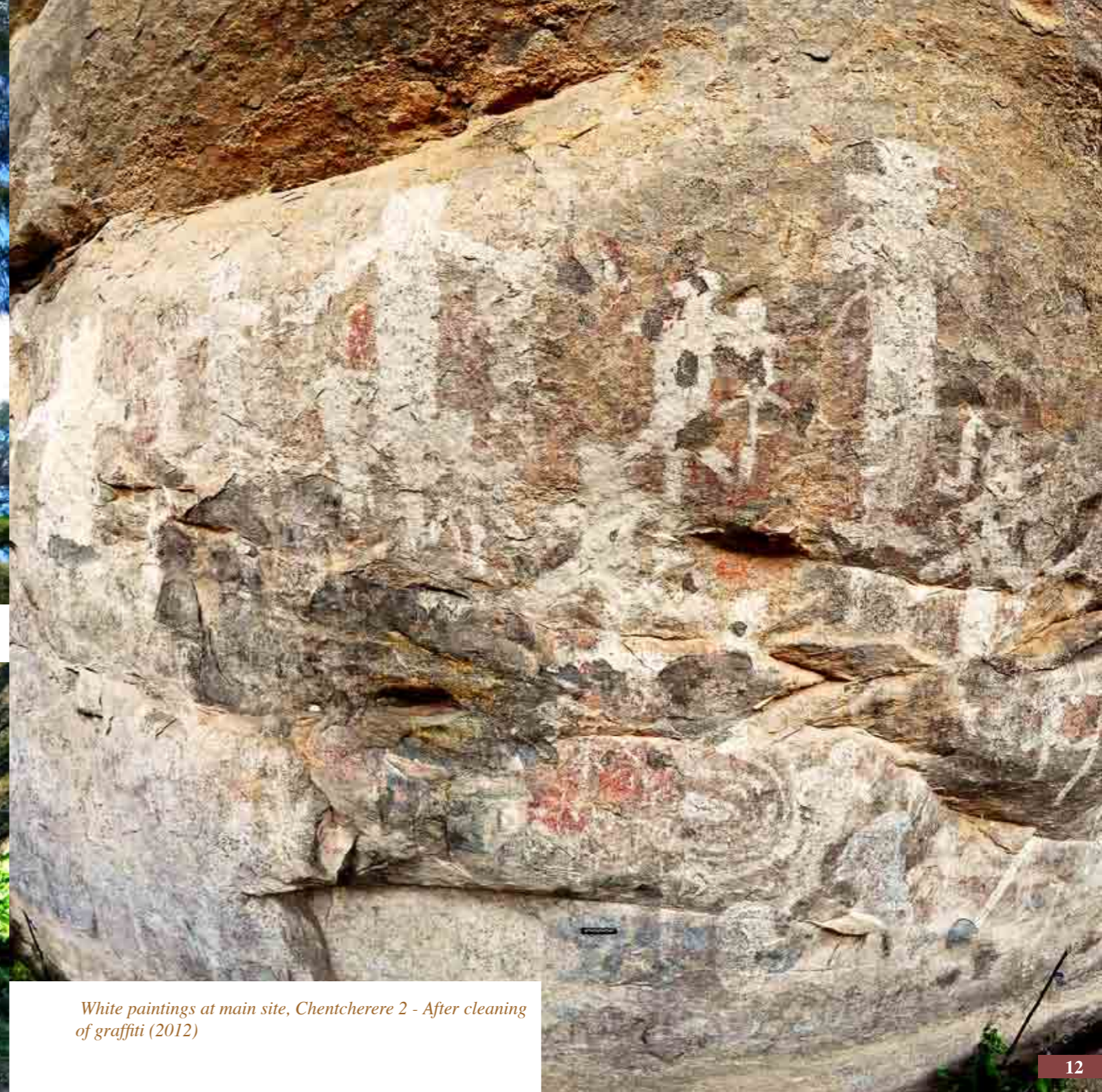




The larger of the two Chentcherere Hills

Chentcherere Main Site

This is a very important shelter on the smaller of the two Chentcherere hills ("ya Mwana") which has been recently cleaned. Known as Chentcherere 2, it features a large number of white Chewa figures, some life-size, many apparently wearing masks, as well as a variety of other shapes, dots and reptiles and some large bichrome (red and white) paintings. In addition to these there also red Twa/Akafula geometric paintings at each end of the shelter.



White paintings at main site, Chentcherere 2 - After cleaning of graffiti (2012)



The shelter at Chentcherere 1, also situated on the smaller hill (ya Mwana)

Chentcherere Upper site

This shelter/cave (Chentcherere 1), also on the junior hill, is above and to the left of the main shelter (2) and can be reached from the left end of the main shelter. The most striking paintings at this site comprise a small cluster of red and white paintings. One very striking stylised white human figure with arms and legs outstretched and a small white feline, possibly a leopard and a small red geometric together with some less clear red paintings below. There are wonderful views from this cave.



Some of the paintings at Chentcherere 1, which is situated above and to the left of Chentcherere 2

Namzeze Site

Open to the public



Namzeze, Men's Initiation Site

This is a very impressive site. A huge cavern, quite high up, looking out over the valley towards Chongoni Mountain which includes both Twa (Akafula) red paintings and Chewa white paintings. Some of the red paintings are very detailed/fine with masses of tiny white dots, for example, on the red nested curves.

Red and white paintings to the right of the cavern



Red and white paintings at the entrance to the cavern. The red paintings are Twa/Akafula paintings



Examples of some of the different styles of paintings including Chewa (white) images and Twa geometrics

Mphunzi Sites

Open to the public

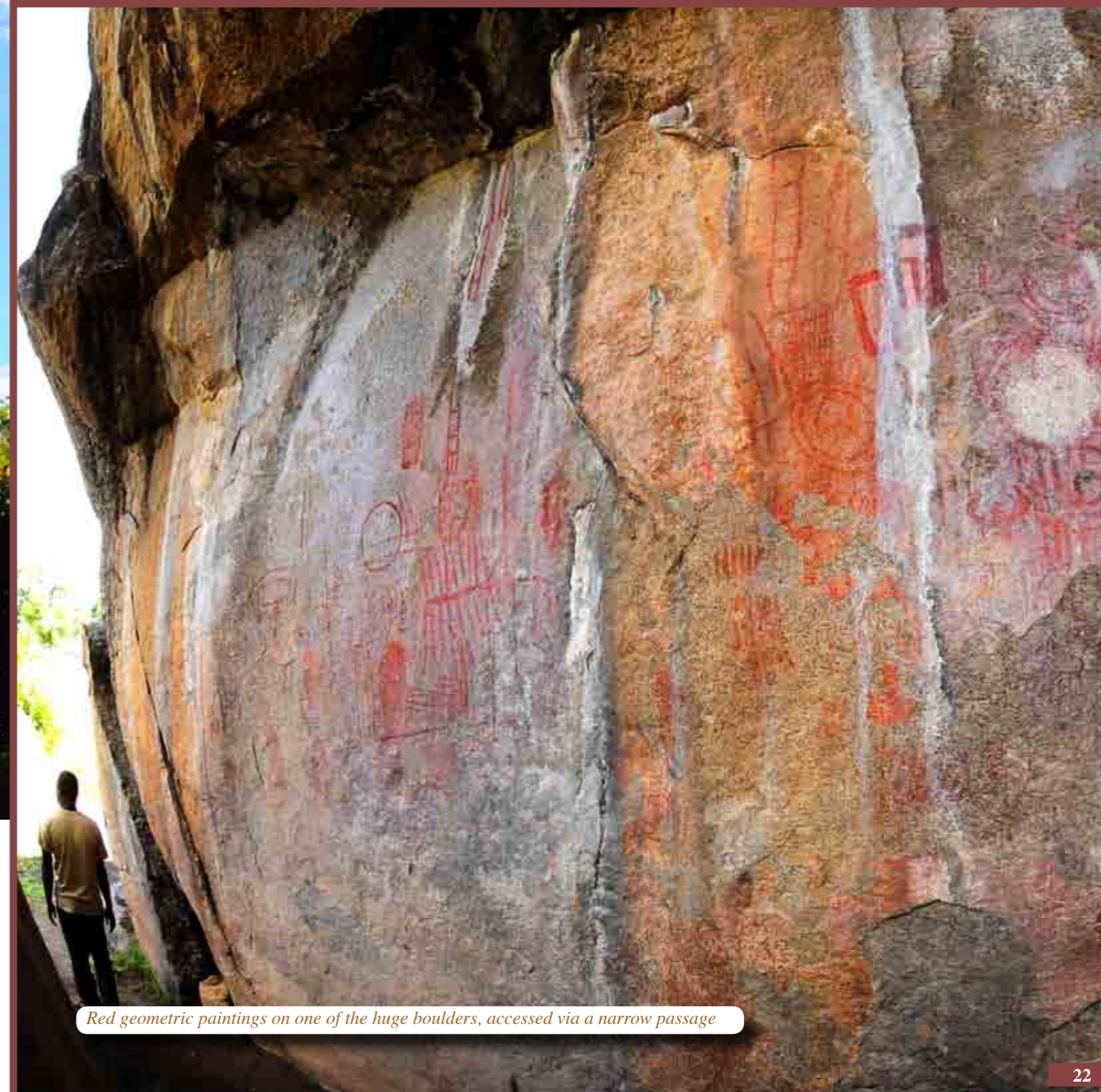




Mphunzi Mountain / Hill, seen from village

Mphunzi 1

This site consists of several big boulders with a natural passageway between them. On one of the boulders in the passageway is a series of red/orange Twa (Akafula) paintings covering several square metres.



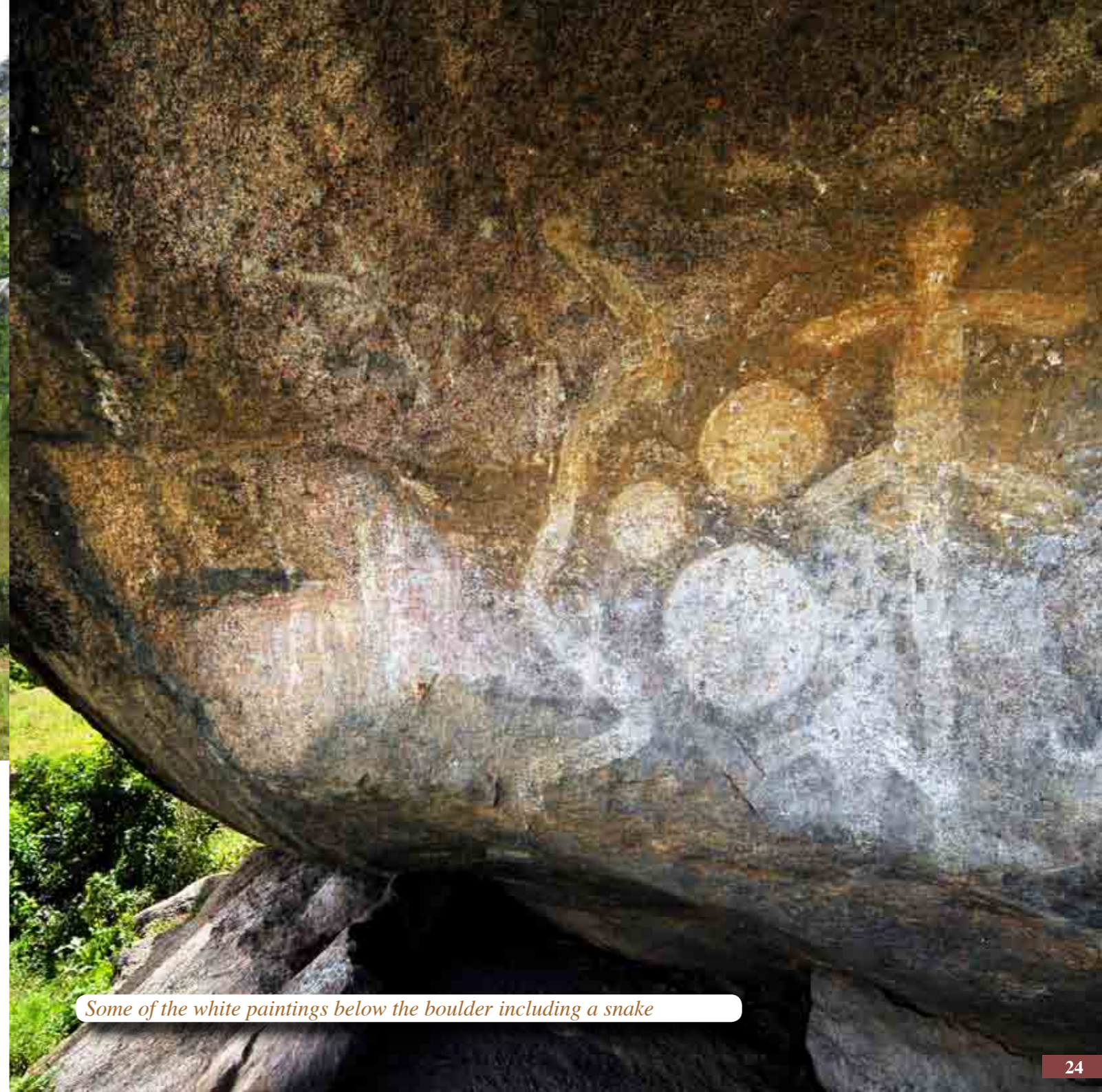
Red geometric paintings on one of the huge boulders, accessed via a narrow passage



This site is located at the base of the left boulder in the middle distance

Mphunzi 3

This site comprises two small shelters on 2 different boulders situated about 15 metres apart, just above a few thatched houses below Mphunzi Hill. The lower of the two shelters has an unusual group of white paintings featuring a large snake, two lizard like creatures and three white circles resembling eggs. To their left, but not as clear is a white star. The second shelter on the upper boulder has a hollowed-out, shallow cave above ground level with some red and white paintings that are hard to identify.



Some of the white paintings below the boulder including a snake



This site is clearly visible below central boulder at the bottom of the photograph

Mphunzi 4

This site is sometimes known as the Bull Site, perhaps because it was thought to resemble a bull. It consists of a very large free-standing boulder below the main mountain/hill which rises abruptly behind it. Below this boulder is a long natural shelter with a number of white Chewa paintings, the usual reptile like figures.



Close up of main panel in the shelter below the boulder

Mphunzi 5

This site is not far from Mphunzi 1 and is in two parts. The front part, nearest to the village consists of a large boulder with a tree growing up the side of it and on the inner face of this boulder is a very tall animal (perhaps 4 metres high) which appears to have human legs (woman's facing forward) and a giraffe's head facing to the right. The second part of the site is between this tall animal and the main hill and consists of Twa abstract paintings.

The main feature at this site is a very tall thin, giraffe-like figure with head facing right clearly visible on the right of the photo. It was published by Desmond Clarke in 1959



Mphunzi 7

This site is quite a large shelter beneath a boulder high up on Mphunzi Hill with great views over the surrounding country. On the roof of the shelter are a number of white Chewa paintings of reptile-type figures. But at the back of the cave are some very interesting and unusual paintings including vertical 'reptiles' (?) resembling seals. Two of these are black outlined with white dots. There is also a reptile-like figure with a human head. One of the reptiles seems to be connected to an amorphous shape that appears to morph into the neck and head of a giraffe.

White, Chewa paintings below a huge rock high up on Mphunzi Hill



Details of reptilian images on the roof of the shelter

Phanga La Ngoni Site

Not yet open to the public



Phanga la Ngoni (Chongoni Mountain)

This site comprises a huge boulder high up on Chongoni Mountain with large numbers of Chewa paintings on its orange-coloured protected surface. There are the usual reptile-like human (?) figures together with birds, lizards, strange, comic looking humans, a large lizard/crocodile etc. There are magnificent views from the indigenous bush on the upper slopes of the mountain. Nearest village, Hinda

Some of the White paintings at the site. Recently a large termite hill was removed from the rock face (bottom right), revealing a possible white crocodile. Note graffiti



Chongoni Mountain Site

Not yet open to the public



Chongoni Mountain Geometric Site (26)

This unusual red geometric site is located in a cluster of broken boulders even higher up Chongoni Mountain and a bit to the west. There are several interesting panels but the most interesting figure was a mirrored pair of ear-shaped concentric circles, beautifully drawn. Since the site was visited in 1993 by the Director of RARI, Dr. Benjamin Smith, part of one of the panels here has cleaved from the main rock which we have recorded.

The site is located high up on the mountain, with huge views and sheltered areas behind



Examples of other red geometric paintings at the site



Diwa Sites

Not yet open to the public





Twa paintings are located at the base of a huge boulder on the slopes of the mountain.

Diwa 1

This site consists of a big shelter at the base of a very large boulder on the slopes of Diwa Hill. The art consists of large numbers of abstract and geometric designs.



View of the Twa geometric paintings on the roof of this shelter.

Diwa 2

This site consists of a big shelter at the foot of a very large boulder on the upper slopes of Diwa Hill. On the roof of this shelter is a remarkable but very faded bichrome Twa painting.

Nsama Wa'ngombe Site

Not yet open to the public

This is an interesting Twa/Akafula painting site situated to the south east of Dedza near the village of Chipchikira. The southern (concave) face of a boulder is decorated with a large number of intricate red Twa paintings.

Red geometric paintings on a boulder surrounded by agricultural land



View across the valley from the site



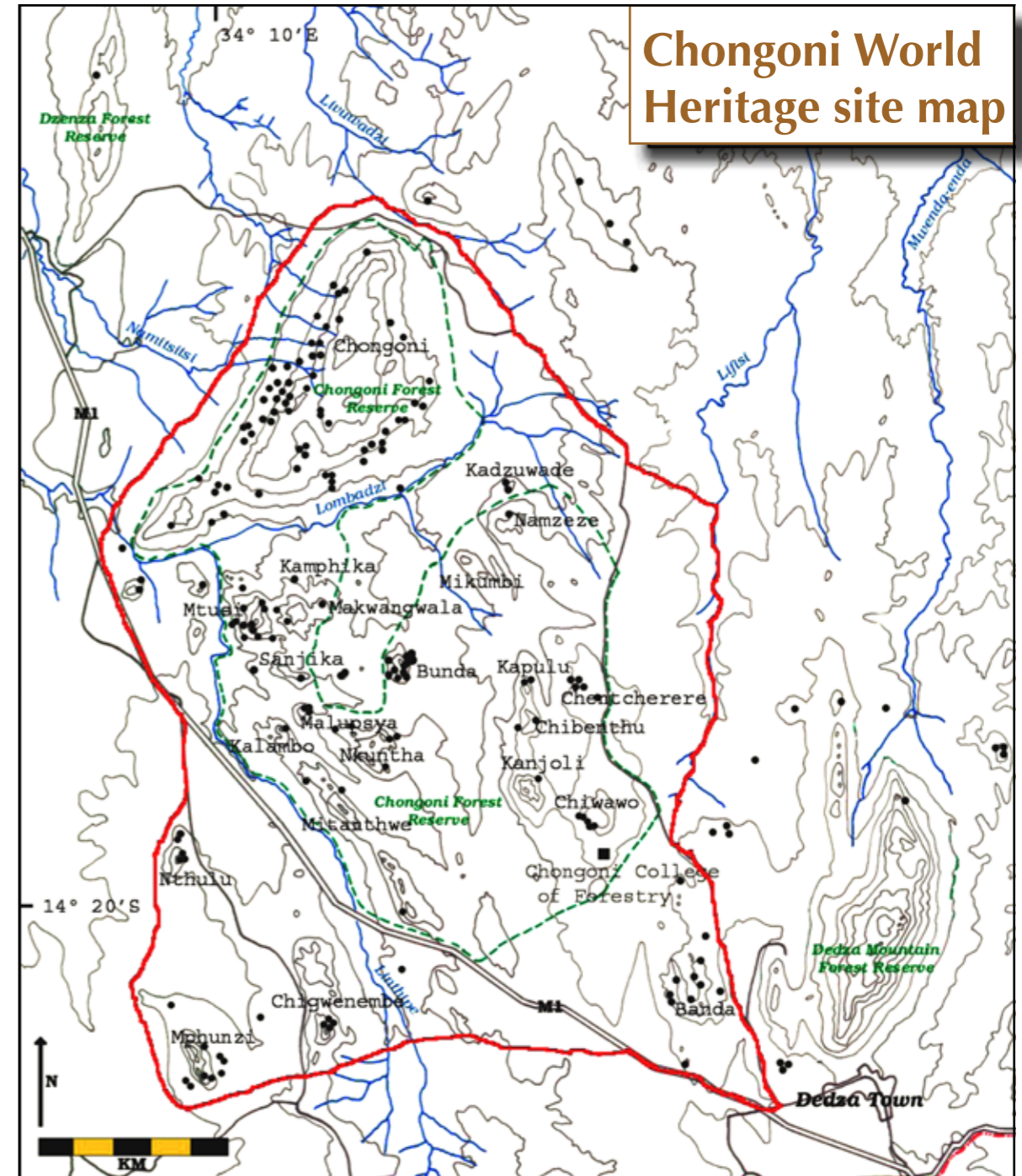
View up the hill towards site next to trees

Conservation

Rock art is fragile and is irreplaceable. The greatest threats to the art are ignorance and neglect. Thus the first step in preserving the heritage has been to raise awareness and partner with local communities to safeguard it. The conservation project which followed the listing of the site also included removal of graffiti from the main Chentcherere site (2) as well as from Chentcherere 1 above the main site, as well as monitoring and environmental audits. This project was a joint collaboration between Malawi's Department of Antiquities and TARA, the Trust for African Rock Art.

The graffiti removal was carried out by an expert restorer from the USA, Clare Dean (*see photos below*). This was a highly successful exercise and by the end of the mission all the graffiti which had been recorded by Terry Little and Alec Campbell the previous year had been removed. The team were however alarmed to see that even more graffiti had been added to the Phanga La Ngoni site on Chongoni Mountain since their visit there in 2011 showing that there is still much work to be done with the communities.

Expert rock art restorer, Claire Dean, with RARI assistant Nhlanhla Nkobi cleans off years of graffiti from a White Chewa paintings at Chentcherere 2



Chongoni World Heritage site map

Rock art visitors Code of Conduct

These rock paintings are very old, fragile and easily damaged. Please help to preserve them by following these requests:

1. Do not touch the paintings. Your fingers leave sweat and oil marks on the rock which cannot be removed.
2. Do not put any liquids on the paintings. They cause the paintings to fade.
3. Do not make your own paintings or write your name on the rocks. This destroys the value of the paintings and spoils the experience for other visitors.
4. Do not litter. Take your rubbish with you when you leave or use the trash bin provided.

Rock paintings are part of our heritage and are protected by the laws of Malawi. Please respect the laws and the traditions of the local community.



Other attractions

Dedza Mountain

This impressive Mountain (*ubove*), its upper slopes protected within the Dedza Mountain Forest Reserve, rises to 2,198 metres on the northern outskirts of Dedza Town. The mountain can be climbed as a day trip starting from behind the Golf Club Resthouse. The countryside around Dedza is characterized by granite inselbergs that rise above the Rift Valley Escarpment, many of which are protected within the Dedza Mountain, Chongoni and Mua-Livulezi forest reserves. The area hold many attractions for walkers, birdwatchers and outdoor enthusiasts.

Mua Mission

Mua Mission, about 20kms east of Dedza as the crow flies, is one of the oldest Catholic outposts in Malawi and was established by the "White Fathers" in 1902. It is famous for its Museum which forms part of the KuNgoni Centre for Arts & Culture founded by Fr Claude Boucher Chisale in 1976. It is best known for the huge amount of information about the 3 main tribes of the central region. The outside walls of the museum are covered in murals painted by Fr Boucher, that illustrate the history of the country. There is a spectacular collection of around 400 Gule Wamkulu masks.

Lake Malawi

Lake Malawi (*below*) at the bottom of the Great Rift Valley is one of Africa's largest lakes and was originally known as Nyasaland (Nyasa means Broad Waters). A fresh water lake, it is about 590 kms long and 83 kms wide. The closest place on the lake from Dedza and the best place to experience the lake which also has the best accommodation is Cape Maclear a peninsula that juts north into the lake.



PLACES TO STAY IN DEDZA

Dedza Pottery and Panjira lodge are both good options. Dedza Pottery has 13 rooms and good food. Email <dedzapottery@africa-online.net>

INFORMATION

A new Information Centre will shortly be opening near Dedza which will provide a range of information on the Chongoni World Heritage area/Site. See also www.visitdedza.com.