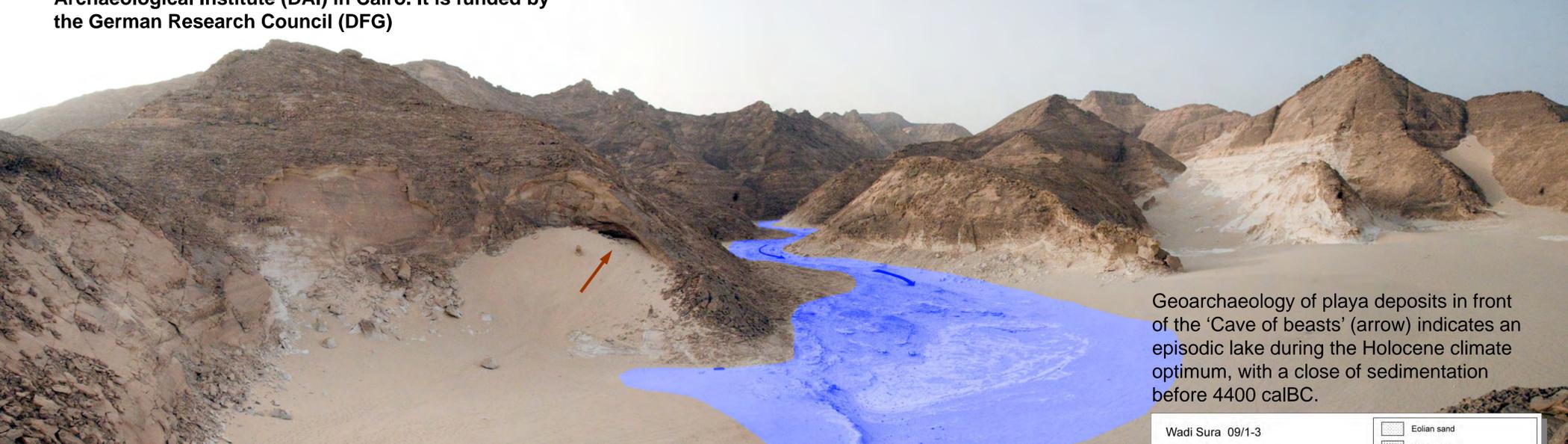


WADI SURA

WADI SURA is a joint archaeological and conservation project of the University of Cologne, the Cologne University of Applied Sciences, and the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) in Cairo. It is funded by the German Research Council (DFG)

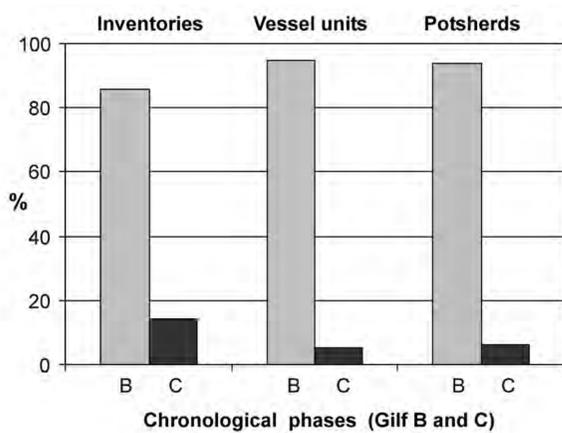
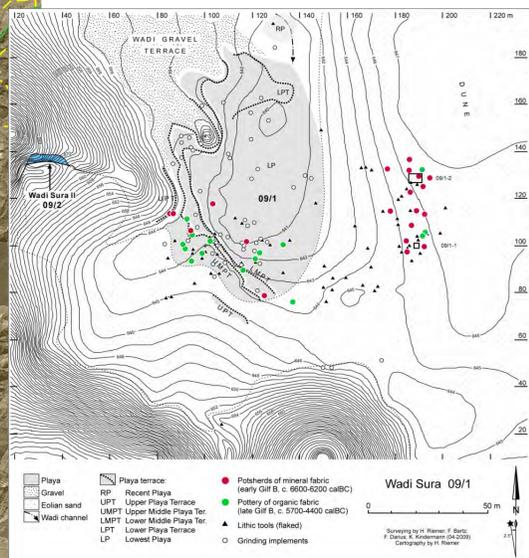
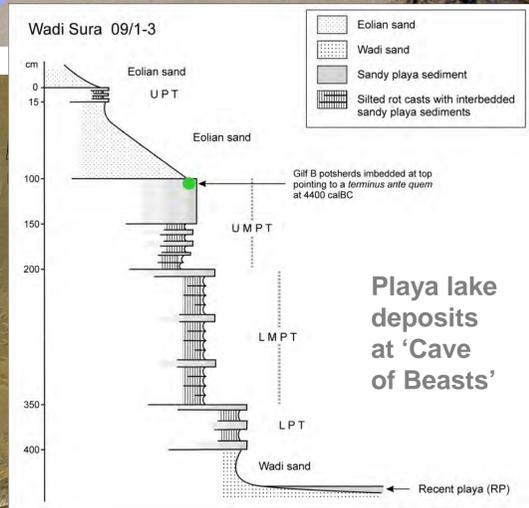
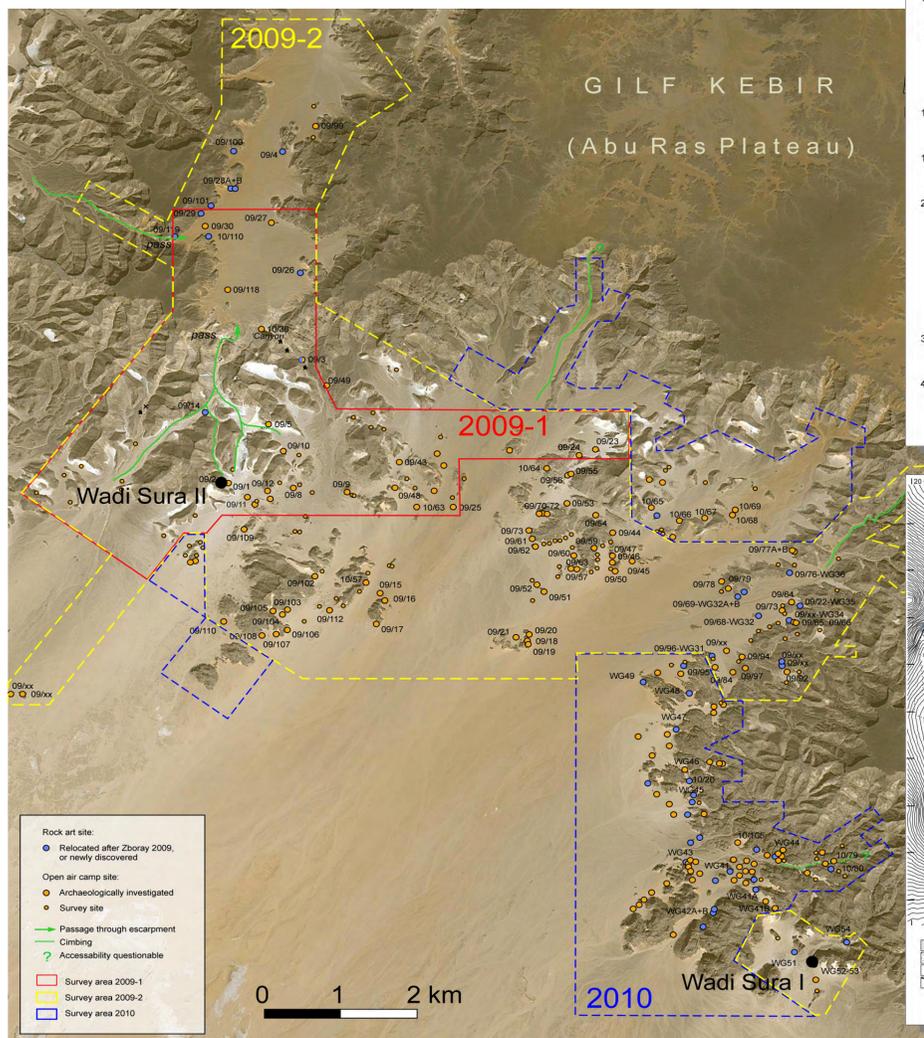
Rock art in context: Landscape Archaeology at Wadi Sura (SW Egypt)

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Geoarchaeology of playa deposits in front of the 'Cave of beasts' (arrow) indicates an episodic lake during the Holocene climate optimum, with a close of sedimentation before 4400 calBC.

In 2009 the WADI SURA project started to investigate the Holocene prehistoric landscape at Wadi Sura in Egypt's Southwest. This micro-region is one of the most spectacular rock art landscapes featuring the 'Cave of Swimmers' already known since its discovery by Almsayir in 1933, and the 'Cave of Beasts', discovered by Foggini in 2002. Both caves are characterized by vivid depictions of thousands of painted humans, animals, and super-realistic figures. Recording the paintings and systematic archaeological surveys in the area carried out during three field campaigns in 2009 and 2010 now offer a breakthrough in the dating and context interpretation of the rock art. The examination of c. 300 archaeological sites recorded evidenced a major occupation of the area during the Gifl B phase (c. 6600-4400 calBC) which is suggested to be contemporaneous to the so-called 'Wadi Sura style' in the paintings. The 'Cattle herders style' postdating in terms of relative chronology as well as the Gifl C pottery (c. 4400-3500 calBC) are less substantiated in the area, pointing to the interpretation that both occurred during the same time period. The survey, moreover, evidences the close spatial and functional relationship between rock art and camp sites as well as a distinctive connection to specific resources and geo-topographical factors.



▲ Three campaigns of survey walking between the 'Cave of Swimmers' (Wadi Sura I) and the newly discovered 'Cave of Beasts' (Wadi Sura II) yielded more than 300 archaeological sites, both rock art shelters and campsites. Most sites connect to water resources along the foot zone rocks of the Gifl Kebir Plateau escarpment.

◀ Percentage frequencies of Wadi Sura pottery by phases:

Gifl B phase pottery (c. 6600-4400 calBC) indicates the dominating occupation phase at Wadi Sura, while the Gifl C phase (c. 4400-3500 calBC) is only sporadically evidenced. The same picture appears in looking on the rock art styles and their relative dating. The earlier 'Wadi Sura style' dominates the rock art of the region while the 'Cattle herders style' is rare.



The 'Cave of Beasts': a 15 m panel painted with approximately 8000 figures.