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LYA DAMS

## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AT THE 'ORGAN' SANCTUARY IN THE CAVE OF NERJA, MALAGA, SPAIN

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*Summary. This paper covers two aspects of an unusual Palaeolithic sanctuary located in a small recess in the cave of Nerja. The first shows the way in which the artist or artists took advantage of a spectacular group of tilted and tightly packed folds in painting their sides, hollows and edges. The second stresses the musical effect obtained when striking the edges with a wooden stick, in the manner of a percussion or lithophone. Some edges have been broken at various heights of old and their worn appearance testifies to their repeated use. We believe the sound effect to have been part of some kind of ritual taking place deep inside the cave, which may have been associated with the painted signs and symbols.*

The cave of Nerja, located on the Mediterranean shore at a distance of 54 km to the east of Malaga, was discovered in 1959 by local boys (Dams, L. and M. 1973). It is an extensive cave system on two levels, respectively Nerja I and Nerja II, the accessible lower one being visited by an average of 350,000 people every year; in addition, its excellent acoustics and lofty proportions have initiated a summer festival of concerts and ballet. Temperature and humidity changes caused by the large number of visitors have been recorded in both levels, where temperature was already abnormally high at the time of the discovery; if no steps are taken toward the cave's preservation, it will probably become irretrievably ruined.

The present entrance is artificially cut at 180 m above sea-level, as the original opening was blocked by rock-fall sometime between 2500 and 2000 BC (Gimenez

Reyna, S. 1962; Pellicer Catalan, M. 1960; 1962). Excavations have been in progress since the cave's discovery, mainly near the original blocked entrance. A considerable depth of habitation deposits with occupation layers going back to 10,000 BC has been excavated, while during the Neolithic and the Bronze Age the cave was used for surface burials accompanied by grave-goods; these include a large quantity of marble, slate and limestone bracelets of excellent workmanship (Gimenez Reyna, S. *et al.* 1961; Hopf, M. and Pellicer Catalan, M. 1970; Pellicer Catalan, M. 1960; 1962). A Solutrean deposit with red ochre and burials has also been reported at the rear of Nerja I, in the Hall of the Cataclysm, which is a huge hall of chaotic appearance, pointing to great geological upheavals in the past (Solo de Zaldivar Yebenes, P. 1977).

Palaeolithic cave-art was noticed in both