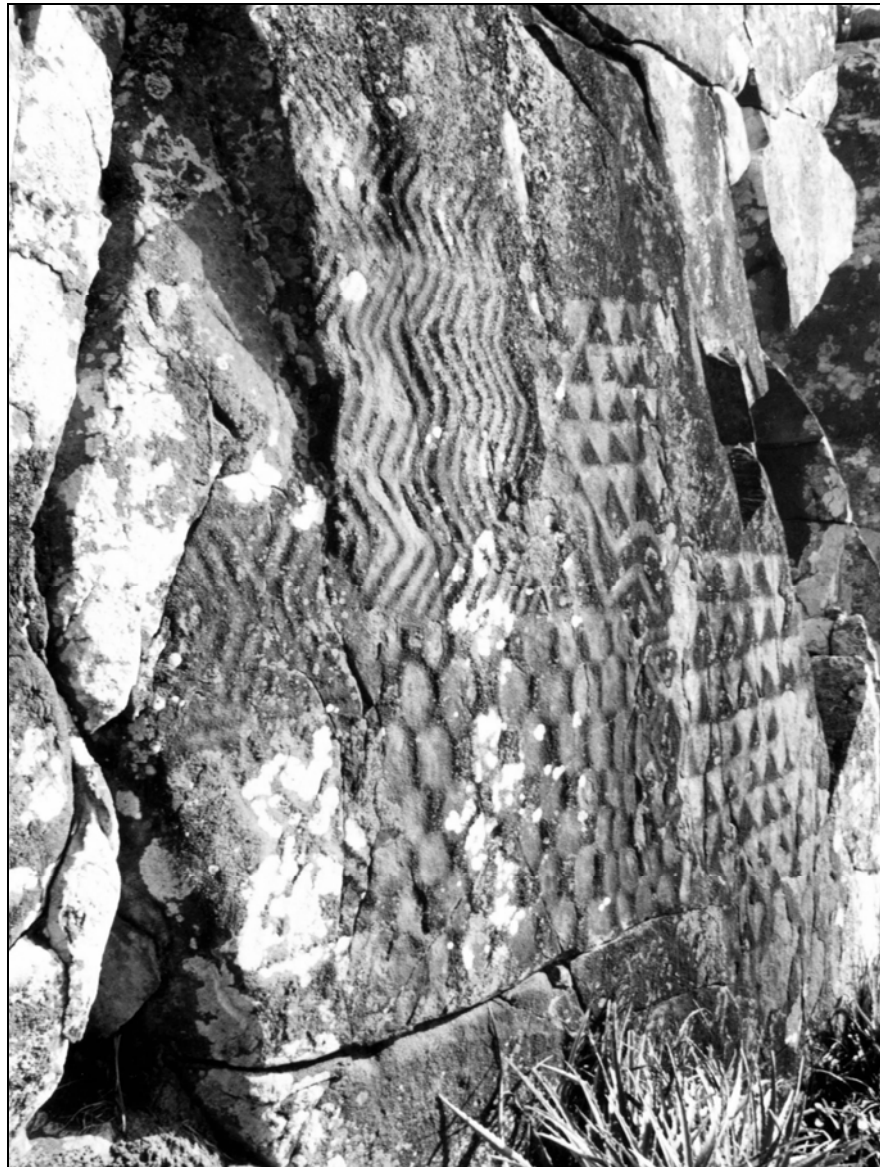


THE ISLAND OF CAMPECHE

In April of 1998 Margie and I flew to Brazil. We had been to this part of the world when we visited Easter Island, but this time I wanted to go to a different island, one that has even been called the *Easter Island of the Atlantic*.

The island of Campeche is tiny, about 800 yards long and 300 wide and floats like a ship on the horizon off the coast of the large island of Santa Catarina, in the south of Brazil. The amazing thing about Campeche is that it is the home of over 130 geometrical petroglyph sites, one of which is carved with a unique panel of perfect 'hexagons'.

Because of the Bradshaw Foundation someone had sent me the Bolivian Rock Art magazine and in it I saw a faded black and white photograph of the *Hexagon Panel*. The photograph so intrigued me I wrote to the editor who kindly put me in touch with a man named Keler Lucas who had taken it. A correspondence began, the outcome of which was that the Foundation helped him publish a book on the geometrical petroglyphs of Campeche.



The 'Great Panel' of Campeche

I found the photographs in Keler's book mesmerising, but there was a problem; the text was in Portuguese. I decided that I had to go and see these incredible works of art for myself. As we planned to expand the Bradshaw website, I persuaded the trustees that this could be a good first step towards becoming truly international. Keler and I exchanged faxes and made a plan about when was the best time of year to visit the island. He arranged a hotel, the flights were booked and Margie and I flew off to Brazil.

Keler's written English was very good so I assumed there would be many Brazilians who would speak English. How wrong can one be! In the whole airport of São Paulo we found only two people who could understand us, so making the connection to Florianopolis, the capital of the island of Santa Catarina, was very stressful. We fell out into the Arrival Hall exhausted and found no one to meet us! I pulled out a copy of Keler's book and waved it about above my head. Up walked a man about 50 years old, smiling, carrying a rose for 'Mrs Margie'. This was our first taste of Brazilian time, which can best be described as 'around about, if possible...'

We piled into a little car, which I was to get to know very well over the next few days, and set off for the Santinho Beach Resort. We soon discovered that Keler had a good sense of humour as well as being passionate about the petroglyphs that he had spent 20 years searching for, finding and recording, without any Government help at all!

The island of Santa Catarina is 80 miles long and varies between five to ten miles wide. The airport could not have been further from the hotel, and to add to the length of the journey the Brazilian road authorities have liberally used 'sleeping policemen' wherever possible. (For those who don't know this term, a 'sleeping policeman' is a hump across the road aimed at slowing the traffic.) The Brazilians have made their humps six inches high and narrow so the cars have to crawl over them in bottom gear. However, this has no effect on the traffic speed as the drivers rush up to them, brake madly, hop over, and then accelerate away as though they are in a Formula One racing car! The humps are situated every mile, in pairs! An hour later, when Margie and I were beginning to wonder if the hotel existed, we arrived at the Santinho Beach Resort. Keler helped us register and promised not to reappear until after lunchtime the following day, for a press interview!

The hotel is a sprawling complex of time-share apartments, so we were transferred to a tiny van and driven to our room. We arrived at 817 and the young boy took us into a hallway and showed us a double bedroom and a bathroom. It all looked great, but then we noticed a flight of wooden stairs. The boy signalled us to follow and set off up the steps. We came out into a fabulous sitting room, open kitchen and dining area, and an enormous terrace, from which we could look out to sea and down onto the beach. What had Keler let us in for?

We were too tired to care so taking full advantage of a well-stocked freezer in the kitchen we helped ourselves to a beer and drank it while looking out with wonderment from our grand terrace, breathing in the warm tropical air and listening to the waves breaking on the beach below. What a place! However, even in Paradise you have to sleep.

We awoke next morning, climbed our wooden staircase and went out onto our beautiful grand terrace and looked out onto a quite amazing sea view. The sun was just up and the sea was sparkling. A mile of beach ran away up the coast with hardly a person in sight.



View from our terrace

We dressed quickly and found a way down onto the cleanest softest sand we have ever walked on. It was low tide so the beach was about 100 yards wide and we had the whole place to ourselves. We walked north towards the far headland, reached it in half an hour, and then turned back towards the hotel. A couple of other guests had appeared by the time we arrived home and one or two fishermen. The only other beach users were two cows and an enormous white Brahman bull.

By this time we were getting hungry, so we set off to discover where the restaurant was hidden. The buffet catered for every taste in eggs, cheese, fish, a bewildering display of cereals and masses of fruit. We chose a table by a window that we were able to sneak open without upsetting the air-conditioning, and decided that the 16-hour trip had been well worth the effort.

We would not be able to keep the terrace, sitting room, and two bathrooms, but the rest of the hotel and the beach were ours to enjoy. After breakfast I walked to the reception to find out what the damage had been for one night and what kind of room we could afford to replace our palace. I nearly died when the clerk told me that the room was *free*, courtesy of Mr Marcondes, the Director! Walking on air, I hurried back to tell Margie.

As promised, Keler arrived at the resort after lunch, with the Press. As none of them could speak English, and as I don't understand a word of Portuguese, I have no idea if the answers I gave to the questions Keler asked me on their behalf were correctly interpreted, but everyone seemed happy, nodded their heads wisely and busily scribbled notes.

We then all walked over to the rocky point that bordered the hotel grounds and had a look at the petroglyph that Mr Marcondes had had protected with a very elegant sunshade of rope. A catwalk had been built around the carving so visitors could see, but not touch. It had been very well done and was a credit to the hotel. It is the only protected site on the whole of Santa Catarina as the local government has done nothing to date to protect any of the other indigenous carvings.



Shelter protecting the engravings



Santinho petroglyph

Next we had a photocall! Keler and I leant over the rock and pointed at some places on the petroglyph where bits of flaking rock were laying loose, waiting for the next storm to remove another section of the priceless carving. We then all trooped back to the bar and had a beer before saying goodbye. The

next morning our photo was on the front page of the local newspaper, and Keler was overjoyed with what had been reported.

This report was followed by a special feature the next day and the outcome of that was an official visit to the island of Campeche by the Director of the Department of Antiquities the following month, who immediately instigated a project of administration and preservation. After 20 years of working on his own this was all good news to Keler, especially as he was asked to be a member of the 'board of advisers'. It is also very satisfying that the Foundation had a second win, the first being Grahame's Bradshaw paintings in Kimberley. With Keler's Campeche photographs we would be able to bring more amazing Rock Art to the world's attention through our website.

My trip with Keler over to the island of Campeche was quite an adventure. He collected me from the hotel at seven o'clock for the two-hour drive south to the small fishing village, where we had to be by nine sharp, or we would literally *miss the boat* as we were to go over to the island in the Fishing Club's supply launch. Fishing is a very popular sport in Santa Catarina and the Club had built a tin shed on the island as a summer camp for its members.

We made it on time, leap-frogging over hundreds of 'sleeping policemen' on the way, my breakfast going from stomach to throat and back with every hop. Keler parked and locked his valuables in the boot before walking down the beach to the jetty. He was pleased to see a car full of reporters arrive, because he had not been told that they were going to join us.

Also waiting on the jetty was a girl from the Department of Antiquities! Keler told me that this was the first time an official from the Department had visited the island and was the result of our newspaper article! We all piled into the fishing boat and set off on the 45-minute cruise over to the island. The old Perkins diesel thumped and belched, filling the beautiful morning with noise and stink. As we drew nearer I could see that the island was thickly forested with tropical scrub trees amongst which waved a few elegant palms.

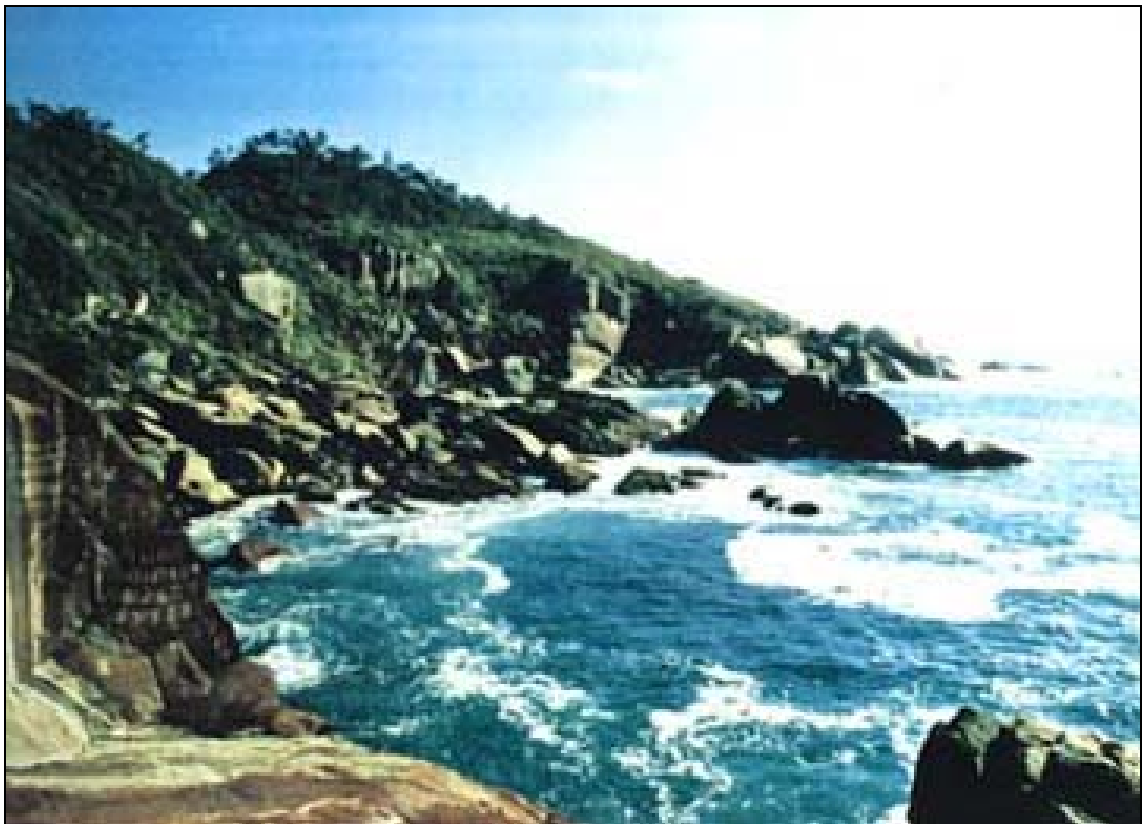
We rounded a headland of stunning pink granite rocks and saw a crescent of incredible beach of pale yellow sand. What a paradise! The water was Caribbean blue and crystal clear. Our fishing boat nosed its bow onto the beach and we jumped down into a couple of feet of water. Keler had warned me that there was no jetty so I was wearing my bathers, but he had not warned me that the water would be icy cold!

There were about seven of us in the group and after getting our trousers and boots back on we set off up the beach to the Fishing Club. I was shown round the tin-shed clubhouse and hoped this was not where I was going to have to spend the night! The old man who looked after the place proudly showed us his pets, calling them out of the jungle by banging a saucepan full of leftover rice. There were hundreds of cat-like creatures with long ringed tails, so agreeing to stay the night on the island began to look like a very bad idea!

Hugo, our guide, runs a beach kiosk and is called the *Angel of Campeche*, as he is the unpaid guardian of the island. Everywhere he goes he has a string bag slung over his shoulder to collect rubbish, over two tons every year! Following him we set off up the track that led away from the beach into dense undergrowth. We emerged from the shady tunnel and found ourselves looking at a completely different scene to the soft pale yellow sand of the beach where we landed. The Atlantic facing coast was a blasted bomb site of rock.



Campeche Island beach



The Atlantic coast of Brazil

Instead, we were standing on the brink of a granite cliff looking straight down onto gigantic boulders against which the Atlantic swell was surging with considerable force. Wave after wave was being dumped on the rocks before rushing back into the sea as foaming waterfalls. From where we stood the view was majestic. On either side of the bay were two rocky promontories and in the middle was a tongue of great boulders pointing out to sea.



Geometrical petroglyph platform marked by dots

We stumbled down a goat track to the jumble of rocks above the surging waves and then clambered over them to reach the base of the cliff. We climbed up and eventually arrived at an eight-foot wide platform, the back wall of which is a vertical flat surface. It is here that the geometrical petroglyphs have been carved. The main area is covered with quite remarkably perfectly interlocking hexagons and above these a panel of beautiful running lines. Next to them is a panel of saw-tooth equilateral triangles.



The Great Panel of petroglyphs

While Keler explained about the incredible rock art to the girl from the Department of Antiquities and the reporters, I examined the petroglyphs. They really were quite amazing and the work of pecking them must have taken ages. By now the sun was high and the rock was throwing off heat like an oven. We climbed down off the platform and went to have a look at a giant boulder near the tongue of rocks that juts out into the middle of the bay. On the flat face is carved an astonishing *double mask*, one element of which had a unique feature, a *circular crown* over the top of the right-hand figure.

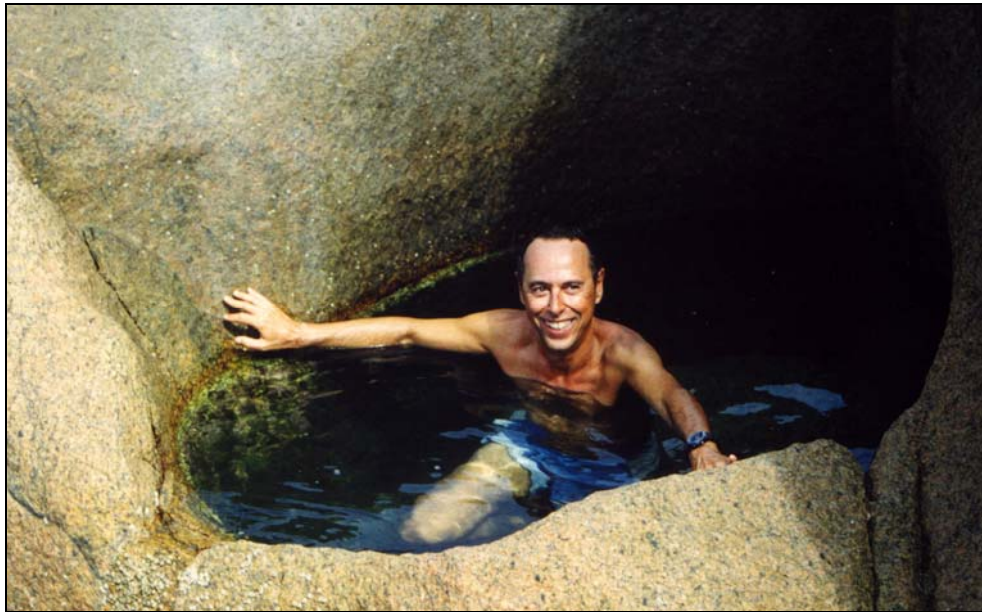


Campeche 'Great Masks'



It really is a breathtaking carving. Keler called the Department girl over to the left-hand side and pointed to a light spot on one of the lines. Someone had scratched away the patina breaking the hardened rock surface. Keler explained that tourists scratch the lines so that they can get a better photograph! The reporters were scribbling and the girl was muttering while Keler was praying something might now be done to protect this precious art!

Behind the carving is an incredible natural feature, a great bath of seawater, some four foot deep and six foot long. It has been hollowed out by sea action on the two large boulders, which we could see lying at the bottom of the bath. Keler stripped down to his shorts and jumped in, asking me to take a photograph. I was tempted to get in myself as I was boiling hot and my shirt was wringing wet, but after I had put my fingers into the water I thought better of risking a heart attack. Keler hopped out shivering.



A cold plunge

Before returning to the beach on the west coast we visited one more site that required more up and down rock climbing that left me even hotter, so returning via the tunnel of shade was a great relief. Back on the beach Keler took me to a fisherman's cottage away from the Club, and showed me where I was to spend the night. The reporters and the Department girl were going back to the mainland on the boat, however, Keler wanted me to see the hexagon panel at dawn next day saying that was the best light for taking photographs.

The cottage was owned by a man in São Paulo, but was looked after by a retired fisherman, his daughter-in-law and her three-year-old son. The old man was the cook and he had prepared a lunch of rice and shredded chicken for us. As we were absolutely famished by then the meal was very welcome.

After lunch Keler and Hugo led me up the beach to see the northern end of the island. More rock climbing and oven heat. Hugo was barefooted and wearing bathers and every now and then would dive off a big boulder into the sea to cool off. I would have gladly followed but getting back onto the rocks looked extremely difficult and terribly dangerous. I also thought about what the barnacles would do to my feet!

All that afternoon we clambered over boulders, scaled rock faces, pushed through prickly cacti, eventually working our way around the top end of the island and back to the hexagon panel. On the way Keler showed me magnificent panels of circles, masks and double diamonds. He has found 130 petroglyph sites on the island, each one having some unique example of carving. One of the best panels was of running lines and immediately reminded me of a very similar painted wall I had seen in northern Australia.



Running lines

I have never needed a cold beer more than by the time we arrived back at the beach. Apologising profusely Keler brought me a glass of water saying that the fisherman had no refrigerator! He then asked me if I would like to see where I was sleeping.

I was led into a tiny room and asked which of the four bunks I would like, so I chose the one nearest the window and tried not to think about the coming night. Still holding my empty water glass I returned to the kitchen and seeing a large container of water sitting on the table, went to help myself. "No, no," called Keler, "that's casharta." Alcohol! After half a glass of it I was definitely feeling brave enough to go for a dip in the sea, however freezing.



The hut with two hammocks

The water was breathtakingly cold, but once I was numb, what a relief from the heat of the day. We swam around for a while and then walked down the beach towards some large rocks. The tranquility of the scene, the beautiful shape of the rocks and the spotlessly-clean soft white sand made me think of what a Japanese temple garden must look like.



Japanese garden!

Keler led me over to a long low rock set in the sand. It was covered with what he called 'Grinding Circles'. They are amazing. If they were used for grinding, what were they preparing? I had the sense that I was looking at a sort of factory. Was it children's food, fishhooks, or ornaments? I have since read that the Indians in the Brazilian forests spend more hours of each day grinding shells into discs to wear as necklaces, than they do hunting, but I couldn't believe that this was the cause of such deep circles.



Grinding Circles

Whatever the purpose of the circles, they are beautiful to look at and conjured up a marvellous picture of a 'Garden of Eden' existence for the Indians in prehistoric times. Keler told me that there were similar 'grinding circles' up and down the entire coast of southern Brazil.

Next day I was shown a different type of factory; this time 12-inch long thin grooves, all in parallel lines. These grinding surfaces are cut into very hard rock and must have taken years and years of rubbing to make. Were they for sharpening stone tools, axes or fishing hooks?



Grinding grooves

Dinner was a variation of lunch but it did the job. As the night was closing in I took one more walk up and down Paradise Beach in preparation for what was going to be a tough night. I arrived back at the cottage to find Keler, Hugo and the fisherman in a heated political argument.

They invited me to pull up a chair and join in, but as the conversation was in Portuguese I didn't really think that I could add much to the debate! Instead, I climbed into the free hammock on the veranda with the little bottle of whisky, which I had found in my sponge bag. I had been rather brilliant and had brought my hooded windcheater to the island in case I needed it on the boat, so I put it on and tied down the hood. I also took a sleeping pill in the hope that I would fall into a deep coma, not fall out of the hammock, be left in peace all night and miss out on the bunkroom.

The plan worked beautifully. Keler told me next morning that they had sat up arguing until midnight and, as I was sound asleep, they had decided to leave me where I was! In the middle of the night nature called and I had to get up and go down to the sea. On my returning I found the good hammock vacated so I swapped mine for the new one the old fisherman had been using, which proved to be even more comfortable than the old one, and safer!

Never having slept in a hammock before I imagined that I would have a back problem in the morning, but not so, I woke up feeling fit, rested, with neither ache nor pain. Not so Keler and the others. They had sweated all night in stuffy heat, which had caused them to sleep naked, much to the delight of the millions of mosquitoes, which had drunk them alive. As I had been out in the breeze on my cool veranda I hadn't suffered a single bite!

Before setting off to take photographs of the hexagons in the early morning light we breakfasted on bread and jam and hot black coffee. We were soon standing on the platform in front of the hexagons with the sun coming up over the horizon. The light was perfect. The only problem was that to get as much distance between the camera and the panel you had to stand right on the

very edge of the platform. Below the edge was a 20-foot drop! I had thought about this the day before and had asked Hugo to bring along a rope to tie round my waist so he could hang onto me as I tottered on the edge. It worked well and let me relax and enjoy looking at the entire panel.



Held by Hugo with a 20-foot drop to the rocks below

While out on the edge I was also able to study the amazing petroglyphs on the floor of the platform at my feet. There are two panels here, one being my favourite diamonds and the other of squares made up of dots, all arranged as 5 down, but 3, 4 or 5 across. The compositions on the vertical wall and the floor are really quite remarkable and must have been done by a very sophisticated people.



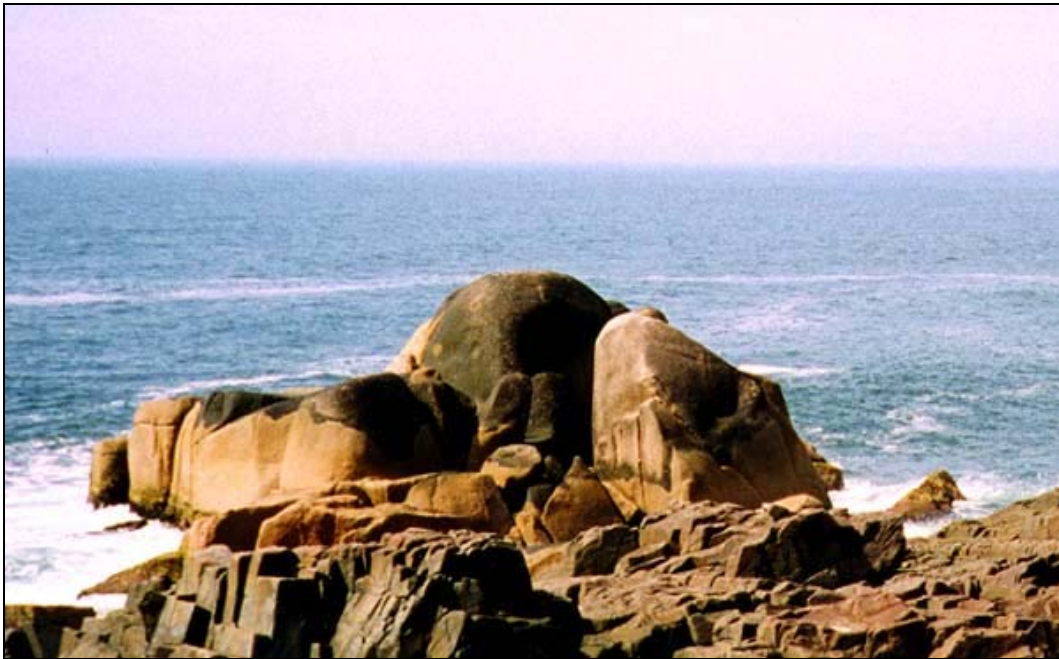
Squares

and

Rhombi

What did they all mean? The hours of work that the petroglyphs represented, and the ceremonies that must have taken place at this spot, made my mind reel. After taking my photographs I sat for a while with my back against the wall and looked out to sea. The sun had climbed higher, bathing the bay and rocky coast in a beautiful golden glow. What a magnificent view!

I started to look around with binoculars and my eyes were drawn to the great tongue of rock that jugged out to sea in the middle of the bay. I couldn't believe what I saw at first but, yes, there was a face looking straight back at me. I looked again and saw a pair of eyes, a mouth, and chin. Keler had been telling me that he had found several rocks at various sites that he believed had faces carved into them. I turned to him and said, "If you want a face, what about the one out there?" pointing to the tongue of rocks. "Oh you've seen it have you? Extraordinary isn't it?" I asked, "Do you think it is natural or man-made?" Keler replied, "I don't know, but whoever carved these petroglyphs must have also seen it from here."

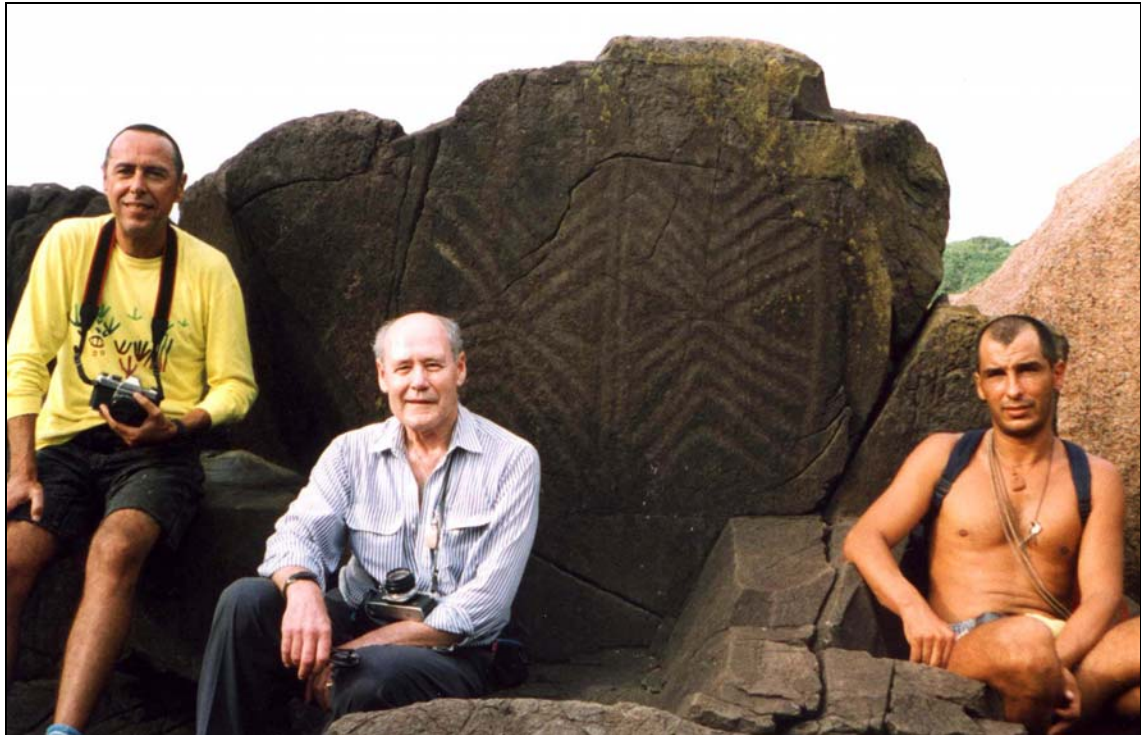


The great tongue of rock with a 'face'

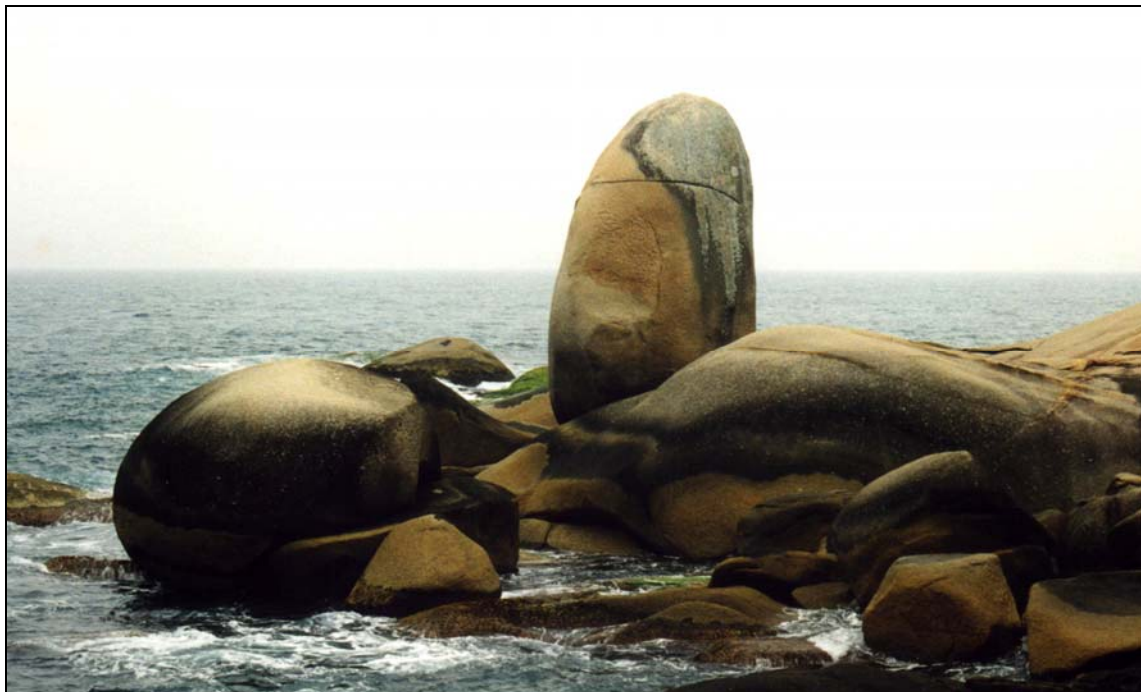
We climbed down the cliff and went over to look at the Face. It is about three foot high and impossible to reach because of the sea and the sheer wall of the rock. It reminded me of the faces of the Easter Island statues by the way it stared straight over our heads back at the petroglyphs.

We then turned to have another look at the Giant Masks of Campeche. The carving is remarkable and to think that it is completely unprotected from tourists was quite incredible.

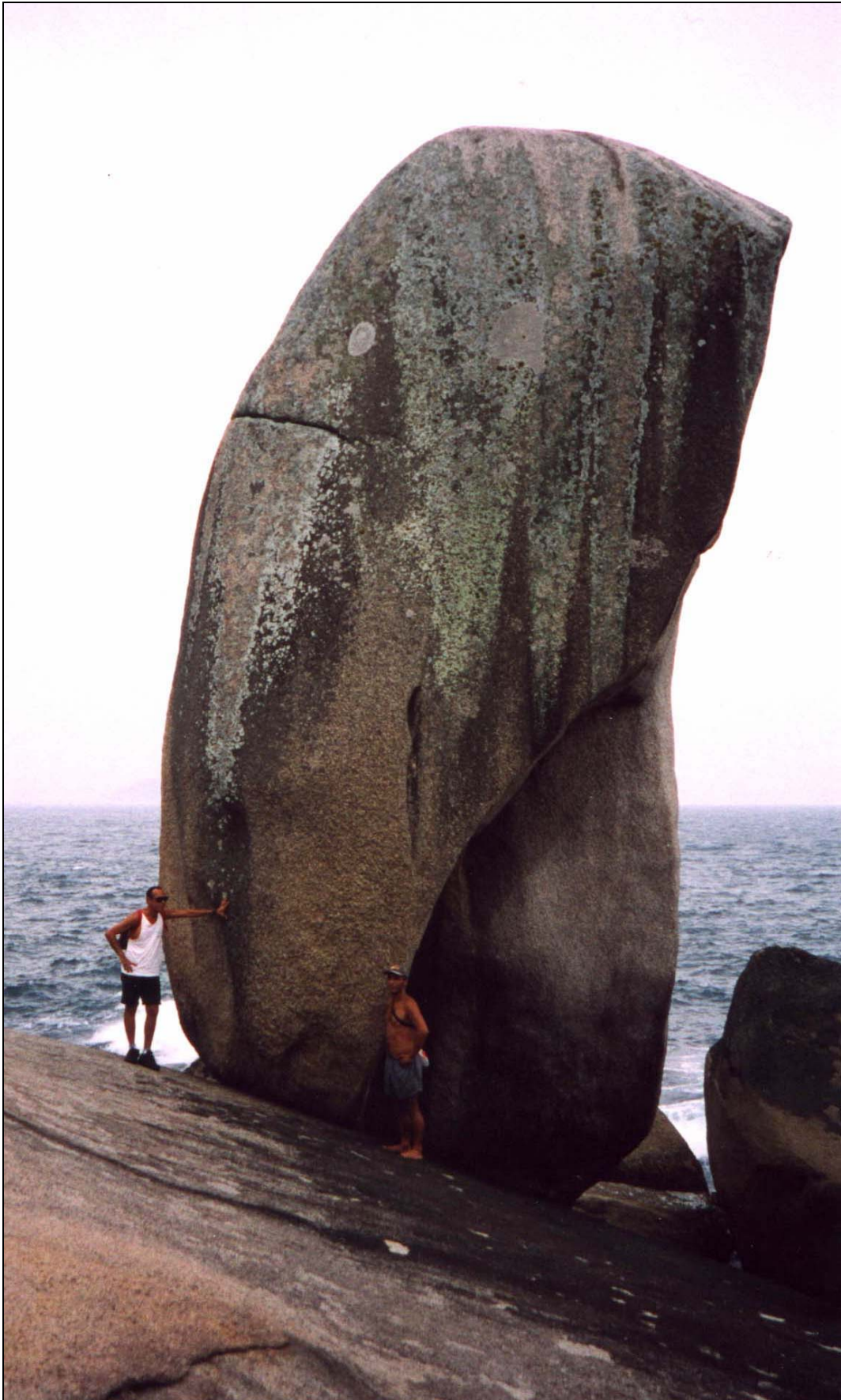
I set up the camera so we could take a self-timer photograph of the three of us in what must be one of the most mysterious places in the world. Why were all these petroglyphs here on one tiny island in such a remote spot and how was it possible that they were so beautifully executed by primitive peoples? Surely this was an extremely sacred place. As the most sacred and revered act has to be the disposal of the dead, was this island a burial site?



Keler and Hugo, the 'Angel of Campeche'

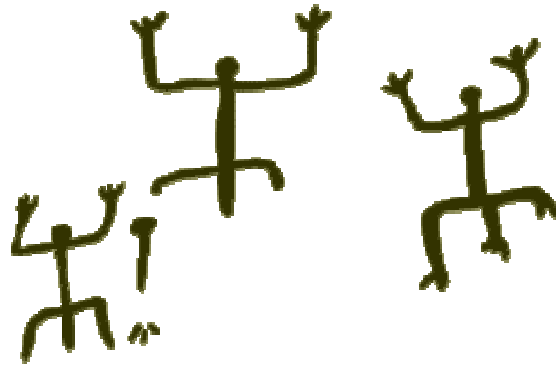


A spectacular coastline surrounds the island



A giant of a rock

We had one more site to visit on the east coast. Clambering up, over and under rocks we arrived at the family of three manikins.



At first I thought that the presence of primitive manikin figures beside such sophisticated geometrical symbols was a real mystery, but then I realised that if the object of the geometry was to represent the gods, then here they were doing what I had done 15 years before when I had used *stick figures* to represent *Adam and Eve*. The difference was that I had added spirals to show they them as 'divine beings' who possessed *imagination*.



'Adam and Eve'

Near the family is another 'mask' and across it is scratched the name of a vandal. The ignoramus must have done it recently because Hugo said that the name had not been there the month before. On this sad note we set off back towards the beach to catch the boat to the mainland.

We arrived at the beach and went to say goodbye to the fisherman and collect our gear. Keler pulled out his mobile phone and called the Club. There seemed to be a lot of walking to and fro in conjunction with much arm waving before Keler came over to me and said that the Club boat could not take us back as they had *gone fishing!* However, they promised that another boat would come over from where we had left the car, although it would not be here for another couple of hours. That did not seem to be a problem, as we would still get back to Margie for a late lunch. Also I would be able to have a swim, which would be very welcome, as the morning's walk had left me dripping wet again.

Keler and I swam for about half an hour and then dried off by walking up and down the beach. On getting back to the cottage Keler rang again and was told that the promised boat had also *gone fishing!* They would not be able to collect us until the evening! With horror I began to visualise another night on the island. Just then a ferry full of children arrived in the bay and dropped anchor. The children had come over from the mainland for a picnic and a look at the Giant Masks.



Children to the rescue

I guessed that Keler's cell phone batteries must be running low and that very soon we were going to be stuck with no means of communication, so I told him that whatever happened he was to get me onto the ferry and off the island. "But," he said, "it's going to a different place to where my car is." I replied, "It doesn't matter, at least we shall be on the same island as Margie." I

have never been more relieved than when the ferry headed for Santa Catarina with me on board!

We arrived back at Keler's home port, although two hours away from his car. The village had no taxis so we walked to his house and he then remembered that his keys were locked in the boot of his car! His neighbour was digging in his garden and came to my rescue and offered to take me back to the hotel. Another friend was contacted and said he would take Keler back to his car when he had finished work. It was going to be a long day for Keler, but surely better than the possibility of being stuck on the island for another night with a dead cell phone!

So ended my adventure to the island of Campeche. The next day Keler was going to take us to the island of Arvoreda to see another site seldom visited and very special. He had ordered a scuba diveboat for the trip and they would wait for us, as we would only be on the island for an hour! The landing would be very difficult as there was no welcoming beach, which meant that we would have to transfer to a rubber dinghy to get ashore. Old tennis shoes were recommended for the final leap, and of course swimming trunks. If the wind were blowing from the wrong direction when we got there we would have to abandon the attempt altogether. It all began to sound a bit like D-Day and the invasion of Normandy!

Thank goodness Keler gave me the morning off after the Campeche trip, as every muscle in my body was screaming from the rock-climbing exercise of the day before. I silently blessed the strong arm of Hugo, who had turned out to be an 'angel' in more senses than one. Without his helping hand over some of the larger rocks I don't think I would have made it.

Keler collected us after lunch and we drove up to the northern end of Santa Catarina where a man was waiting with an inflatable dinghy. The diveboat skipper welcomed us aboard and told us where to be sick because he didn't like the look of the weather! He was right, the swell caused the boat to heave and plunge as we headed towards the island of Arvoreda.



A nasty swell was swishing along the coast

After being tossed around for nearly an hour we arrived off the island and anchored 100 yards out from the coast. Through the binoculars I could see that the swell was swishing a lot of water up and down the big round granite rocks along the coastline. Keler assured me that it would be all right although much too dangerous for Margie. I didn't like the sound of that! The inflatable was given the 'kiss of life', making it drum tight, and we climbed aboard. A disappointed Margie was left with the mate to look after the boat.



Being reassured!

When we got to within 20 foot of the rocks the skipper idled the engine while he and Keler examined the situation. We obviously needed an anchor as the rubber dinghy was rapidly being swept past where we hoped to jump ashore. Back we went to the diveboat and collected an enormous lump of lead on a rope before returned to the fray.

Having dropped the anchor, Keler selected the most suitable rock on which to try to make a landing, tied a rope around his waist, put on a snorkel mask and slipped in to the sea. It was a very formidable-looking shoreline and the swell washed him up against the great rounded rocks, then sucked him off again several times before he managed to scramble free of its clutches. "The man's a spider," said the skipper, laughing. It didn't look like a laughing matter to me, it was my turn next!

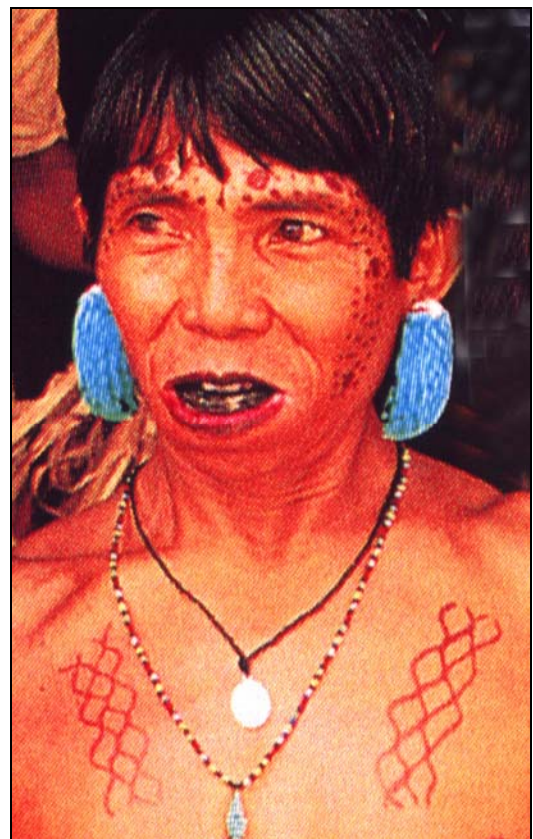
Keler pulled the bow up to the rocks while the skipper had the outboard *full astern*. As the wave rose, Keler pulled, I jumped, and the boat quickly backed off, so that it wouldn't be caught on the rock and be tipped over. Was getting back on board going to be so easy?

We had landed near a great smooth belly of granite that was covered with an enormous panel of petroglyphs. One of the symbols was composed of running lines and circles and was similar to the tattoo that I have seen on a photograph of an Amazon Indian. Surely the Campeche artists would have looked very similar!

We took photographs and admired the panel for half an hour, before starting back to the inflatable.

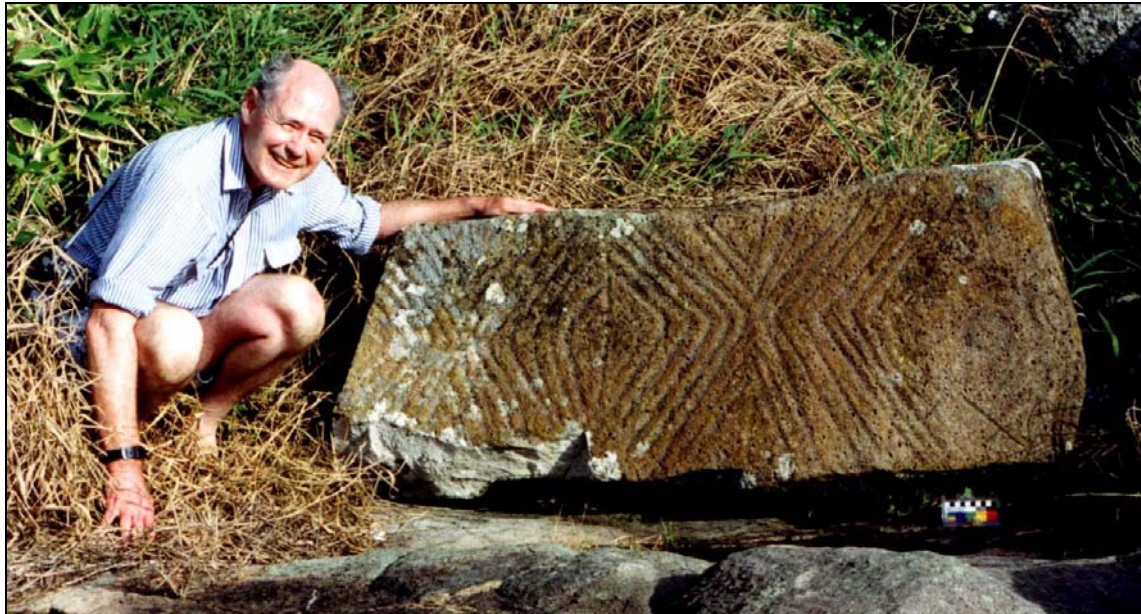


A smooth belly of granite covered with petroglyphs



Similar markings on an Amazon River tribesman

Near the landing spot Keler showed me a fantastic rock carved with a 'double mask' that had a manikin at one end. The area in front of the rock was flat and looked like a little courtyard that had been especially prepared by man.



A fantastic altar stone carved with 'two masks and a manikin'

It was time to try and get back into the inflatable! While we had been examining the petroglyphs the poor skipper had been riding the swell at the end of the bow-rope we had made fast to a tree trunk. Keler pulled in the rope while the skipper ran the outboard *full astern* again. Keler pulled, the bow rose, I jumped, and landed in an undignified heap in the dinghy, but on board! We backed off quickly and Keler jumped into the sea, swam to the inflatable and hauled himself up over the bulging side.

Margie had watched all this from the diveboat where she had been trapped with the mate who had taken the opportunity to practise his English, so she was very glad to see us back! On the way home the swell abated and the sun and clouds put on a great show across the evening sky. So ended an exciting day. Tomorrow would be the final boat ride, this time to Coral Island. Keler would collect me at five o'clock as we had to cross over onto mainland Brazil and travel south to a fishing village some way down the coast.

I woke early and got up straight away as I was sure that Keler would be on time, and he was, driving up exactly on the dot of five. We set off towards Florianopolis and then crossed the suspension bridge, which spans the straits that separate Santa Catarina from the mainland. We drove for two hours through country that reminded me of Australia, there being forests of gum trees planted either side of the road.

The reason we were going to Coral Island was that Keler wanted me to see the damage that the treasure seekers have done to some of the carvings. One of the main problems Keler faces is that many of the sites have been dynamited by the peasants who believe that the petroglyphs mark where the Jesuits hid their treasure during the Revolution, to keep it from falling into the hands of the soldiers.

As we drove south Keler told me the story of his first visit to Coral Island. The island had remained uninhabited until a fisherman decided to make it his home some 20 years ago and had taken his wife and three daughters to live there. The

wife died and some five years later the daughters left for the mainland to marry. The old man refused to leave and became a real hermit, completely self-sufficient and vehemently anti-visitors.

Ten years ago Keler and a friend had decided to go and record the petroglyphs that they knew existed from a Jesuit priest's report. They arranged for a fisherman to drop them off on the island and come to collect them in four days' time. On their arrival the old man was both unfriendly and unwelcoming, but as he had to earn a few dollars to pay for the odd things he couldn't make or grow for himself, he agreed to catch a fish for them.



A petroglyph on 'Coral Island'

Sometime during the last century there was a terrible drought in the Azores Islands off Portugal, so the authorities decided to transport half of the population to southern Brazil, which was then a Portuguese colony. The average height of an Azores man is five foot and they are equally as broad across the shoulders. These people did not interbreed with the other settlers so there are still whole villages totally populated by pure Azoreans and the old fisherman was one of them.

While Keler and his friend set up their pup-tents the old man went to catch a fish. Within half an hour he returned with one, the head over his shoulder and the tail hanging down his back all the way to the ground. It was

enormous. He chopped off the head for himself and handed over the rest to Keler in return for a couple of dollars.

The two young men decided to go to bed as soon as the sun went down. Keler had a torch, but his friend was using a candle. Keler turned his torch off and settled down, but as he did so he noticed a strange orange glow through the tent canvas. He looked out through the flap and saw that his friend's tent was on fire. The candle had fallen over and the nylon material was now a blazing inferno.

Keler dragged his friend out of the tent still in his sleeping bag, which had also caught fire. He managed to peel it off him, but by this time his friend had suffered terrible burns to his face and hands and was in awful pain.

Then followed a nightmare for Keler because his friend needed urgent medical treatment and the boat was not coming to collect them for four days! Climbing to a high place Keler started to flash an SOS message towards the mainland with his torch, continuing until the batteries failed. Next he started lighting fires in the hope of someone coming to investigate.

All the following day he sent up smoke signals, but not a single fishing boat passed by. By this time his friend was in a really pitiful state and going out of his mind with the pain, as his hands had blown up to the size of footballs. The old man had applied fish oil to the burns and had wrapped them in banana leaves, in an effort to try and cool the burns.

Keler told the old man that he was going to blow up the gas-operated automatic lighthouse that flashed away all night on the top of the island, because surely then someone would come to investigate. Keler believed that if he could not get his friend off the island by next morning, he would surely die.

As he was preparing the fire to blow up the lighthouse gas tank, he saw a fishing boat come round the point of the island. He could not believe his eyes because it was his friend who had said that he could not return earlier as his son would be away fishing in the boat. It turned out this was true, but during the night his friend had an awful dream from which he awoke with the sense that there had been an accident on the island. He radioed his son at sea and asked him to go to the island and check up on Keler.

The story ended happily as the boy completely recovered, and today his hands and face show no sign of having been badly burnt. Keler has become a very good friend of the old man, who still lives on the island and, despite now being very old and infirm, refuses to leave. The reason that the old man is able to remain there is that the young man who was burnt went back to the island to look after him!

We arrived at the village to meet the fisherman who would take us to the island, but it was not to be. The wind had swung to the south and it would be impossible to land without great risk to the boat. If something went wrong and the boat was damaged we would get stuck there, possibly for days. Keler asked me if I would like to risk it. Having just heard his story of the last time he was stuck on Coral Island, and having experienced Arvoredo the previous day, my answer was an emphatic, "No!"

However, the drive was not wasted, as Keler was able to show me several other petroglyphs on the mainland on the way home, as well as getting us back in time for lunch with Margie. After the meal Keler took me to see some carvings on the headland at the end of our beach, which I would have missed if I had gone to Coral Island.

So ended our amazing week on the island of Santa Catarina. It had been a fascinating time for me and a relaxing holiday for Margie with not an underground cave in sight. On top of all that, hopefully the Brazilian authorities were at last listening to Keler and would protect the petroglyphs for future generations to enjoy and study.

While I was there Keler had told me that there was a group of islands called The Wild Children, that had never been explored. One of these islands was called Little Sister and a fisherman had told him that he had believed he had seen some petroglyphs through his binoculars, but couldn't be sure. Of course Keler was dying to check it out and I thought that it would be a good project for the Bradshaw Foundation to support.

Keler organised the trip for the following summer. Robert Hefner's daughter, Cathy, flew to Florianopolis to join Keler on the expedition. They set off by boat for the island in fine weather and within minutes of landing they had located an amazing petroglyph that Keler named the *King's Mask*, as it also wears a *crown*.



King's Mask

It was a very successful expedition and the reward had been staggering. Keler was very excited and the case for preserving the Indian heritage had benefited immensely while adding a feather to the Bradshaw Foundation's cap!



King's Mask



Detail of the amazing King's Mask