SAHARAN ROCK ART

[Image of a rock art depiction of a deer]

Extraordinary images of animals and people from time when the Sahara was greener and more like a savannah have been left behind. Engravings of hippos and crocodiles are offered as evidence of a wetter climate. [Source: David Coulson, National Geographic, June 1999; Henri Lhote, National Geographic, August 1987]

Most of the Saharan rock is found in Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Niger and to a lesser extent Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia and some of the Sahel countries. Particularly rich areas include the Air mountains in Niger, the Tassili-n-Ajjer plateau in southeastern Algeria, and the Fezzan region of southwest Libya. Some of the art found in the Sahara region is strikingly similar to rock art found in southern Africa. Scholars debate whether it has links to European prehistoric cave art or is independent of that.

The rock art of Sahara was largely unknown 1957 when French ethnologist Henri Lhote launched a major expedition to Tassili-n-Ajjer. He spent 12 months on the plateau with a team of painters, many of whom were hired by Lhote off the streets in Montmarte in Paris. The painters copied thousands of rock painting, in may cases tracing the outlines on paper and then filling them in with gouache. When the copies were displayed they created quite a stir, especially the images of figures that looked like space aliens. Lhote first visited the area in 1934, traveling from the oasis village of Djanet with a 30 camel caravan.

Contact: Trust for African Rock Art run by David Coulson; Exhibit: Memories of Stone at the Museum of Man in Paris displayed painted copies of the images found in Tassili-n-Ajjer.

Websites and Resources on Early Modern Man: Evolution of Modern Humans anthro.palomar.edu; Virtual Ice Age creswell-crags.org.uk/Explore/virtually-the-ice-age; Stone Age Tools aerobiologicalengineering.com

Green Sahara
During the last 300,000 years there have been major periods of alternating wet and dry climates in the Sahara which in many cases were linked to the Ice Age eras when huge glaciers covered much of Europe and North America. Wet periods in the Sahara often occurred when the ice ages were waning. The last major rainy period in the Sahara lasted from about 12,000, when the last Ice Age began to wane in Europe, to 7,000 years ago. Temperatures and rainfall peaked around 9,000 years ago during the so-called Holocene Optimum.

Scientists believed the ice ages and the climate changes in the Sahara were produced by events triggered by changes in the Earth's orbits and rotations based on the fact the timing of the climate changes have correlated with the changes in the Earth's tilt and rotation. Sometimes when the Earth approached close to the sun or the tilt of the Earth exposed the Northern Hemisphere to more sunlight the African monsoon shifted northward or the Mediterranean winds to shift south.

As the Ice Age in Europe ended more water evaporated from the Atlantic filling clouds and and more moisture was brought to North Africa as monsoon winds from Africa shifted north and Mediterranean westerly winds south because of the cooler temperatures in Europe. This caused the rains that nourished western Africa and the Mediterranean region to move into the Sahara in North Africa.

During wet periods in the Sahara oak and cedar trees grew in the highlands and the Sahara itself was a savannah grassland with acacia trees and hackberry trees and shallow lakes and braided rivers. Rock and cave paintings from that time depict abundant wildlife—including elephants and giraffes that lived in the savannahs and hippopotami and crocodiles that lived in the rivers and lakes — and people, who hunted with bows and arrows, herded animals, collected wild grains and fished.

Remnants from the wet periods discovered by scientists include ostrich egg shells, high water marks around lakes that are presently dried up, swamp sediments, pollen from trees and grass and bones of elephants, giraffes, hippopotami, lions, fish, rhinoceros, frogs and crocodiles. Prehistoric inhabitants of Egypt may have raised ostriches. Large numbers of ostrich egg shells have been at excavations at a 9,000-year-old site at Farafra Oasis.
Beginning around 7,000 years the Sahara began changing from a savannah to a desert. The climates changes in the Sahara occurred in two episodes—the first 6,700 to 5,500 years ago and the second 4,000 to 3,600 years ago. These changed are may have occurred when the African monsoons and Mediterranean winds returned to their normal locations.

As the Sahara region dried out grasslands and lakes disappeared. Desiccation occurred relatively quickly, over a few hundred years. Desertification processes were accelerated as vegetation, which helped generate rain, was lost, causing even less rain, and the soil lost its ability to hold moisture when it did rain. Light-colored land without plants reflects rather than absorbs sunlight, producing less warm, moist cloud-forming updrafts, causing even less rain. When it did rain the water washed away or evaporated quickly. The result: desert.

By 2000 B.C. the Sahara was as dry as it is now. The last lake dried up around 1000 B.C. The people that lived in the region were forced to leave and migrate south to find food and water. Some scientist believe some of these people settled on the Nile and became the ancient Egyptians.

Some scientists are currently studying whether global warming could cause the Sahara to bloom again. The current thinking seems to be that yes this is possible but greenhouse gas levels have to increase to a much higher rate than they are at today.
There are several distinct styles of rock art. Most are engravings into stone; some are paintings. Most of the inscribing was done by chiseling away stone. In some places artists made images by chipping away the patina that cover rock, so the image was revealed on the rock itself. The chiseling was done with stone chisels that were hammered from stone tools. Such chisels have been found near inscriptions and were presumably used to make them. Some of the chiseled grooves are more than two inches deep which has helped them endure in the face of desert sandstorms and winds.

Paints were usually made from locally collected minerals such as ocher (red and yellow iron oxide), white clay and charcoal. Blood, fat and urine may have been used as binders. In many cases the colors are still vibrant after millennia of exposure to desert heat. The look better when wet but the moisture damages them. The paints were sometimes applied with brushes made with feathers or animal hair.

Old paintings were often erased to make way for new paintings. Sometimes new paintings were superimposed on top of old ones. Scientists using infrared detection devices have counted up to 12 superimposed layers painted during a period of around 2,000 years at individual sites. It is not known why certain locations were selected for multiple paintings. Perhaps the sites had religious significance or maybe their surfaces and light were particularly good.
Animals in Saharan Rock Art

Among the animals depicted are gazelles, elephants, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, wild Barbary sheep, antelope, giraffes, and prehistoric wild oxen (*Babalus antiquus*). Surprisingly there aren’t any lions. The earliest art appeared about 12,000 years ago. The art from 12,000 years ago to 9,000 years ago is called Babulus period art after the wild oxen. Most of images from this period are of large animals hunted by humans.

Among the most beautiful and expertly rendered images are a pair of life-size giraffes carved into stone around 5000 B.C. in central Niger. The rock art authority Jean Clottes described them as a “a world class masterpiece” that deserved to be in the Louvre. The spots of the giraffes are exquisitely rendered. String leaders from the muzzles of each giraffe to cat-size images of people has led some to wonder if ancient people domesticate giraffes.

A group of more than a dozen six- to seven-foot-tall giraffes was rendered on a cliff face in Libya. They too date back to around 5000 B.C. One scholar said they conveyed “a tremendous feeling of a herd on the move.” Images of hippopotami up to five times larger than life size and images of mother and baby hippos have been found. Bones of hippos dated to the same period the painting were made have been found in the dry riverbed of the Tafassassey River, which once flowed south into Lake Chad.

Describing a 7500-year-old work calls the *Crying Cows* in Tassili-n-Ajjjer in Algeria, David Coulson wrote in National Geographic: “I was stunned by its almost Piccasoan sophistication. The cattle seem to emerge, horns first, from the rock face...The artist chose his canvas carefully, looking for a surface that would catch the sun’s rays and create depth and the illusion of motion through shadow. At the right time of the year, as the light plays across this engraving, you can almost see the cattle move.”
The first human figures in Saharan art were depicted around 9,000 ears ago. This marks the beginning of the Round Head period which overlaps with the late Babalus period and the early Pastoral period. Human figures from this period tend to have rounded heads and featureless faces. The figures range in size from a few centimeters to five meters in height.

Roundhead Period people are shown standing among cattle, hunting with bows, and dancing with masks on their heads. There are many images of running archers in which the strings of their bows and the leg muscles are visible. Pieces that seem to represent some kind of shamanistic experience depict round-headed people floating towards a figure that seems to be a shaman. There are also scenes of everyday life such as people washing the hair. Images of boats have been found in the Nile Valley and the Red Sea hills.

An 8,000-year-old rock paintings in the Tassil-n-Ajjer depicts dancers and musicians. One of the instruments pictured is still played thousands of miles south in the Kalihari. Seven-thousand-year-old cave painting in the Sahara seem to depict bows being used as musical instrument. Bushmen today make haunting music with bow instruments that are placed in the mouth. Sound is produced by tapping a sinew string with a reed.

One painting from Tassili-n-Ajjer dubbed the elephant dance depicts a line of figures connected by a rope or cord. They men wear hip-high white leggings, reminiscent of grass costumes worn in West Africa, and appear to be engaged in some ritual or ceremony.

Bizarre Images from the Roundhead Period
Some of the human-like figures from the Roundhead period are quite bizarre. A well-preserved 4½ foot-high, 8,000-year-old engraving of a mythical beast found in Libya features two mythical catlike creatures engaged in a ritual dance or a battle. Figures, dated to be 2,500 years old, found on boulders in the Air mountains of Niger have tulip-shaped heads and hourglass bodies. Nine-foot-high figures found in the Ennedi mountains of Chad had round heads, enormous buttocks and geometric patterns inscribed on every inch of their body.

Other Roundhead period images include a 10-foot-high horned “god” with bulging biceps and huge scrotum. Next to him is a supplicating woman. One 7000-year-old work depicts a masked figure with plants sprouting from his arms and thighs. Some regard it as the oldest record of the cult of the mask. The masks itself looks very much like masks widely seen in West Africa today.

Pastoral Period of Saharan Rock Art

Around 7,000 years ago domesticated animals began appearing in Saharan rock art. This marked the beginning of the Pastoral Period. The works from this period have a more naturalistic style and depict scenes from everyday life. They are presumed to have been made by herders. The works have more details and appear to express concerns about composition. Rock art specialist Alex Campbell told National Geographic that paintings form this period “started to show man as above nature, rather than as part of nature, seeking its help.”
lived in the Sahara at that time. Black people, some of whom wear garments and adornments and have hairdos like some current tribal groups in Africa, are often shown among herds of cattle. Some show men riding bulls. There are also scenes of couples making love and women carrying children on their backs.

One image from Tassili-n-Ajjer seems to depict help from the spirit world being sought with animal magic. A member of the Fulani tribe that still conduct similar rituals told National Geographic: “The spirit of the earth assumes the shape of the snake goddess, Tyanaba, protector of cattle. Curved lines represent the serpent as she encircles a sacred bull. A man, second from the right joins four women... At the far right, the ‘mistress of milk’ reclines to chant to the earth. She implores that the goddess lift the bulls’ bewitchment—perhaps an illness—and ensure propagation of the herd. The woman third from the left listens for the earth’s response.”

Among the early depictions of war is a battle scene, in a rock painting in Tassili n’Ajjer dated to between 4300 and 2500 B.C., with groups of men firing bows and arrows at each other. In the image a group on the right stand ready to fire their bows as a group on the left begins an assault.

**Horse and Camel Period of Saharan Rock Art**

Mauritania The arrival of the horse in the region around 1650 B.C. inaugurated the Horse period. The arrival of the camel around 200 B.C. inaugurated the Camel period and is seen as indicator that Sahara was drying out and becoming the Sahara as we know it and a desert so dry it could no longer support horses.

Images from the Horse period include hunters in chariots, carrying weapons in one hand and holding reins in the other hand, being chased by a dog. Some scholars regard these hunters as a the People of the Sea, a mysterious group with bronze weapons and armor that unsuccessfully attacked Egypt before retreating into the desert where they assimilated with the indigenous Garamantes, later described by Herodotus as “very powerful people” who rode four-horse chariots and chased black cave dwellers “like the screeching of bats.”
Many images from the Camel period have a childlike quality. The camels in these images are sometimes ridden by riders who ride on saddles covered by a linen framework called a *basour* that provided the riders with some sun protection.

**People Who Made the Saharan Rock Art**

Mauritania

Little is known about the artists that created the Saharan art work. They may be ancestors of people that still roam the desert or they may be ancestors of people that live today in the Sahel or areas further south in Africa. The long hairdos of some rock art figures found in Libya are similar to those of the modern Wodaadbe people of Niger. Body decorations found on rock art images in Chad resemble body art that found in the Surma of southern Ethiopia today.

When the Sahara dried out the people that lived there migrated southward. Rock art found in southern Africa that is similar to that found in the Sahara is thought to have been introduced there by herdsman originally from North Africa who migrated southward over the generations until they reached southern Africa.

Bushmen paintings in southern Africa and the Bushmen themselves have been studied for insight into the art and artists.

**Threats and Efforts to Save Saharan Rock Art**

Threats to Saharan rock include tourist who wet paintings to make them easier to photograph, insurgents who take refuge in caves and use the art for target practice and looters who use chisels, sledgehammers, chain saws, jackhammers and crowbars to try and pry the works loose, often destroying them or at least badly damaging them in the process.

Much of the rock art in Morocco has been removed with crow bars and sold in Europe. As of the late 1990s, according to Morocco’s Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 40 percent of the engravings and 10 percent of the paintings had been stolen or damaged. Some works are retouched by local people in order to secure some of the magic they are thought to possess.

Images were protected by archeologist from the weather and sun with varnish-like sealants. The practice was abandoned when some scientists began fearing that moisture captured under the sealant might cause more damage than the sun and weather.
The giraffes in Niger described above were discovered fairly recently. Even though they lie in the middle of a remote stretch of desert they are near a road and are considered a tempting targets for looters. In effort to at least secure a copy of these masterpiece scientists working with funding from the National Geographic Society and the Bradshaw Foundation made a plaster cast of the giraffes. [Source: David Coulson, National Geographic, September 1999]

Before the cast was made stone was first carefully cleaned and then sealed with a preservative. Layers of silicon paste were applied. The paste was molded over and picked up every physical detail of the rock art. After it dried, a metal frame was placed over the silicon and a layer of non-binding plaster of Paris was placed on top of that as a protective backing for the image. After the plaster dried, the molds were cut into sections and were placed upside down on the desert to serve as a platform. The silicon mold remained on the image. The rubbery silicon mold was then carefully peeled up and rolled up like a carpet. The whole operation largely came off without a hitch. The molds were then shipped to France, where copies were made.

Image Sources: Wikimedia Commons


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The American Colony and Eric Matson Collection:

Egypt and Sinai

Founded in 1881 by Horatio Spafford (author of the famous hymn, It is Well With My Soul), the American Colony in Jerusalem operated a thriving photographic enterprise for almost four decades. Their images document the land and its people, with a special emphasis on biblical and archaeological sites, inspirational scenes,
and historic events. One of the photographers, G. Eric Matson, inherited the archive, adding to it his own later work through the “Matson Photo Service.” He eventually donated all the negatives to the U.S. Library of Congress, which has made them available to the public.

This CD includes more than 450 selected photographs of sites and scenes in Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula, including the Giza Pyramids, Cairo, the Luxor temples, Aswan, Jebel Musa, and St. Catherine’s Monastery. All of the images are included in pre-made PowerPoint® files for quick and easy use, as well as in high-resolution jpg format, suitable for projecting or printing.
Free: Download the Aswan PowerPoint file.

About the Producer: Todd Bolen is a professor on study leave from the Israel Bible Extension of The Master’s College near Jerusalem. He is the producer of more than 20 volumes of photographs illustrating the biblical world, including the Pictorial Library of Bible Lands.

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Cairo, American University, ceiling

Cairo, American University, interior

Cairo, American University

Cairo, Continental Savoy Hotel, Ezbekeye gardens

![Cairo Museum, main hall](image)

Cairo, Continental Savoy Hotel, garden entrance

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Bedouin home in Wadi er Raha
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Dates spread out to dry, Sinai Peninsula

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Enclosure where dates are dried, Sinai Peninsula

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Gathering opium from seed pods of poppies

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Muslim woman in Cairo

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Ayun Musa, Springs of Moses
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Jebel Serbal, magnificent view from mountain

Jebel Serbal

Jebel Serbal, one of mountain's five peaks

Jebel Tahuneh, Hill of Moses

Jebel Tahuneh

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Wadi Esh Sheikh and Wadi Slaf junction

Wadi Esh Sheikh, Diorite dyke

Wadi Esh Sheikh

Wadi Feiran and Jebel Serbal

Wadi Feiran and Wadi Aleyat junction

Wadi Feiran oasis, and Jebel Serbal

Wadi Feiran oasis, distant view of Jebel Serbal

Wadi Feiran scene

Wadi Feiran, abundance of water

Wadi Feiran, gravel terraces
Wadi Feiran, luxurious palm grove
Wadi Feiran, remains of early Christian structures
Wadi Gharandel rivulet
Wadi Gharandel, palms of Elim
Wadi Hebran oasis
Wadi Hebran scene
Wadi Hebran, ascending wadi
Wadi Hebran, caravan ascending wadi
Wadi Hebran
Wadi Hebran, narrow defile at watershed
Wadi Hebran, Oasis of Ardesiat
Wadi Hebran, picturesque palm grove
Wadi Hebran, small oasis
Wadi Isleh, Grand Canyon
Wadi Lejah, Hajjar Mousa, stone of Moses
Wadi Lejah
Wadi Lejah, Nabatean inscriptions
Wadi Maghara
Wadi Maghara, turquoise mines
Wadi Mukattab, Greek inscriptions
Wadi Mukattab
Wadi Mukattab, Nabatean inscriptions
Wadi Taiybeh, bitter spring
Wadi Taiybeh
Wadi Taiybeh
Wady T'Iaa
Weli of Sheikh Abu Talib
Wilderness of Shur
Wilderness of Sin

Sinai, Jebel Musa
Hill of Aaron from Jethro's Path
Hill of Aaron, Golden Calf
Jebel Katarina from Jebel Musa
Jebel Musa from Ras Safsafa
Jebel Musa summit
Jebel Musa, burning bush, silleh bush
Jebel Musa, Chapel of Elijah
Jebel Musa, Chapel of St Mary
Jebel Musa, hill of elders
Jebel Musa, looking east, view of Jebel El Meallawi
Jebel Musa, looking north from mountain
Jebel Musa, near view of silleh bush
Jebel Musa, old Bedouin standing by silleh bush
Jebel Musa, pilgrim steps and first gate
Jebel Musa, pilgrim steps and second gate
Jebel Musa, pilgrim steps leading up mountain
Jebel Musa, silleh bush beneath mountain
Jebel Musa, southern precipice
Jebel Musa, sunrise from summit
Jebel Musa, sunset from summit
Jebel Musa, view of mountains from gate
Ras Safsafa from Jebel Musa
Ras Safsafa precipice
Ras Safsafa willow
Ras Safsafa, ascent by Jethro's Path
Ras Safsafa, general view
Ras Safsafa, shepherd and flock in Wadi er Raha
Ras Safsafa, view from Wadi er Raha
Sinai mountains
Sinai mountains, panorama from Wadi er Raha, left
Sinai mountains, panorama from Wadi er Raha, right
Sinai mountains, view from Jebel Musa
Wadi ed Deir and Jebel Munajah
Wadi er Raha, Plain of Law, from Ras Safsafa

Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery
St Catherine's Monastery from ascent
St Catherine's Monastery from distance
St Catherine's Monastery from distance
St Catherine's Monastery from east
St Catherine's Monastery from Jebel Munajah
St Catherine's Monastery from southeast
St Catherine's Monastery, almond tree in blossom

St Catherine's Monastery, ancient way of entering

St Catherine's Monastery, antique door of church
St Catherine's Monastery, belfry and minaret
St Catherine's Monastery, buttress of exterior wall
St Catherine's Monastery, church and mosque
St Catherine's Monastery, church interior from apse
St Catherine's Monastery, church interior
St Catherine's Monastery, Church of Transfiguration
St Catherine's Monastery, clergy robed in vestments
St Catherine's Monastery, climbing to cell chapel
St Catherine's Monastery, cover of manuscript
St Catherine's Monastery, crescent and cross
St Catherine's Monastery, cross and star on wall
St Catherine's Monastery, crosses
St Catherine's Monastery, details of door carving
St Catherine's Monastery, encircling wall crosses
St Catherine's Monastery, entrance gateway
St Catherine's Monastery, facsimile of Sinaiticus
St Catherine's Monastery, famous library, interior
St Catherine's Monastery, famous library
St Catherine's Monastery, firing antique gun
St Catherine's Monastery, garden from window
St Catherine's Monastery, garden with Wadi er Raha
St Catherine's Monastery, glimpse of church belfry
St Catherine's Monastery, glimpse of minaret
St Catherine's Monastery, Greek monks at entrance
St Catherine's Monastery, Greek Orthodox priests
St Catherine's Monastery, guns guarding entrance
St Catherine's Monastery, inlaid work of altar
St Catherine's Monastery, manuscript with silver covers
St Catherine's Monastery
St Catherine's Monastery, monk artist
St Catherine's Monastery, near view
St Catherine's Monastery, old monk
St Catherine's Monastery, orange grove
St Catherine's Monastery, ornamented stones in wall
St Catherine's Monastery, priest holding prized manuscript
St Catherine's Monastery, primitive elevator
St Catherine's Monastery, well
St Catherine's Monastery, young monk
St Catherine's Monastery, young monks

**Suez area**

Gulf of Suez, north end
Temple of Horus at Edfu
Ismailia Lake
Ismailia, lake and canal from terrace of monument
Ismailia, Mar Monument south of lake, entrance
Ismailia, ship passing through canal, from monument
Port Said, arrival of Turkish transport
Port Said, harbor and entrance to Suez Canal
Port Said, natives coaling steamer
Port Said, quay and landing place
Port Tewfik, avenue along Suez Canal
Port Tewfik, statue of Waghor
Suez Canal at Gulf of Suez
Suez Canal, dredger at work
Suez Canal, entrance with statue of de Lesseps
Suez, view from road to Port Tewfik

Upper Egypt Temples
Abydos, Temple of Ramses II
Abydos, Temple of Seti I, first hypostyle hall
Abydos, Temple of Seti I, general view
Abydos, Temple of Seti I, hypostyle halls
Dendera, Temple of Hathor, carving on exterior wall
Dendera, Temple of Hathor, details of capitals
Dendera, Temple of Hathor, general view
Dendera, Temple of Hathor, great vestibule
Dendera, Temple of Hathor, north gate
Edfu, Temple of Horus, colonnade with carvings
Edfu, Temple of Horus, colonnade with hawk
Edfu, Temple of Horus, entrance to vestibule
Edfu, Temple of Horus, entrance
Edfu, Temple of Horus, general view
Edfu, Temple of Horus, view from pylon
Kom Ombo, Temple of Sobek and Haroeris, hall
Kom Ombo, Temple of Sobek and Haroeris

**Baalbek, Bacchus Temple**

*Also called the "Temple of the Sun"*


A heavy shower drove us under the northern peristyle of the Temple of the Sun . . .
Behind us rose the smooth-cut wall of the cela, one hundred and sixty feet long, and around us were fragments of the six columns of the original fifteen which formed the northern peristyle, together with entablatures, capitals, and the exquisitely carved blocks of the sculptured ceiling . . . . This temple, known to the Arabs as Dar es Sa'adeh, or "Court of Happiness," and generally known as the Temple of the Sun, was two hundred and twenty-five feet in length, including the colonnades, and its breadth about one hundred and twenty . . . . The cela, or temple proper, was one hundred and sixty feet long by eighty-five feet broad, surrounded by the magnificent peristyle of fifteen columns on each side and eight at each end, counting the corner columns both ways. At the eastern end was an inside row of six fluted Corinthian columns, and an additional column on each side opposite the north and south walls of the cela, which are extended to form the vestibule.  
(Source: Picturesque Palestine, vol. 2, pp. 219-20.)

Baalbek,  
Bacchus Temple,  
Leaning Column

The exterior of the façade of the temple is in all stages of decay. The rude hand of barbarians, searching for the iron dowels or metal cores between the joints of the columns, has dug away the base of most of the standing columns to the very centre. Four columns are standing on the south-east side, three on the west, and nine on the north side . . . . Each column is composed of three pieces, jointed so perfectly that a sheet of paper could not be inserted between the edges. Such perfect jointing, and the perfect preservation of the edges, would indicate that the three blocks must have been placed in position when rough, and then rounded and polished while standing. The sculpture of the capitals and entablatures was probably also executed after the blocks were in place . . . . One of the columns on the south side fell about one hundred years ago against the wall of the cela, where it still stands in a leaning position, and although it broke in one of the stones in the cella wall, it is so well put together that it remains unbroken to this day.  (Source: Picturesque Palestine, vol. 2, p. 221.)
Every ornament that could be introduced into Corinthian architecture is lavished on this portal, and yet it is perfectly light and graceful. It is twenty-one feet in width and forty-two feet high. It is composed of nine great stones, six forming the jambs and three the lintel. Each of these stones is of enormous dimensions. When I visited Ba'albek, in 1856, the central block or keystone of the lintel, weighing some sixty tons, had slipped down about two feet. When Pococke and Wood sketched the ruins [in 1751] this portal was in a perfect state, but in the earthquake of 1759 A.D. it sunk down between the two others. It is now supported by a pillar of rough masonry which entirely covers the body of the eagle carved on the soffit . . . . The ornamentation around the portal is the most elaborate known in all the range of Corinthian architecture. Not only the architrave, but the frieze and the cornice are profusely decorated. There are ears of corn, grapes, and vine-leaves, while genii lurk among the leaves in the lower compartments formed by the intertwining vine, though all are sadly marred by barbarian hands. (Source: *Picturesque Palestine*, vol. 2, p. 220.)
The interior of the cella is divided into two parts, the nave measuring ninety-eight feet by sixty-seven, and the sanctum, or adytum, occupying thirty-six feet of the west end. It has no windows or apertures for light. . . . The nave of the cella has six fluted attached columns on each side, between which are two rows of niches, the lower row with a circular scalloped top and a bracket beneath, and the upper with triangular pediments, or tabernacles, forming canopies for the statues. . . . The sanctum, or holy place for the altar, was about five feet above the main floor of the cella, and thirteen steps led up to it. At each end of the steps a door led down to the vaults, from which the priests uttered their mysterious oracular responses. The screen between the nave and the adytum was supported by fluted columns on each side, and on the walls are undulating figures in high relief, representing a sacrificial procession. . . . A more exquisitely beautiful view than that from the east of the portal looking in upon this lavish treasure-house of sculpture cannot be found in the East or the West. (Source: *Picturesque Palestine, vol. 2*, pp. 220-21.)