# Ancient Termite Mounds and Prehistoric Cave Paintings: Unveiling South Africa and Indonesia's Hidden Treasures



### Ancient Termite Mounds Discovered in South Africa

Scientists in South Africa have found that termite mounds near the Buffels River in Namaqualand are over 30,000 years old, making them the oldest known active termite mounds. Researchers from Stellenbosch University, led by Dr. Michele Francis of the soil science department, conducted radiocarbon dating and revealed some mounds to be approximately 34,000 years old.

The termite mounds existed during a time when large animals like saber-toothed cats and woolly mammoths roamed other parts of the world. These mounds are much older than previously known active mounds in Brazil, which are around 4,000 years old. The Namaqualand mounds, known locally as “heuweltjies,” can measure up to 100 feet across and are as deep as 10 feet underground.

The discovery not only highlights the ancient and unique nature of these termite structures but also offers insights into past climates, as Namaqualand was wetter when the mounds were formed. The termites' activities, including carbon sequestration by collecting and storing plant materials, have implications for understanding ecosystem sustainability and climate change.

### Prehistoric Cave Paintings in Indonesia

A team of researchers, including Maxime Aubert from Griffith University and Adam Brumm, has identified what is believed to be the oldest known narrative cave art in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Found in the limestone cave of Leang Karampuang, the painting is at least 51,200 years old and depicts human-like figures interacting with a wild pig. This discovery was published in the journal Nature.

Using advanced techniques to date calcium carbonate deposits on the artwork, the team found that the narrative scenes predate famous European cave paintings such as those in Lascaux, France. This finding challenges the traditional belief that artistic expression and the cognitive developments associated with it originated in Europe.

The researchers suggest that these prehistoric artworks likely represent a rich tradition of storytelling among early Homo sapiens. The study's enhanced dating techniques promise to revolutionize rock art dating, providing more accurate ages for ancient depictions worldwide.