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THE METAL AGES AND MEDIEVAL PERIOD

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THE EVIDENCE OF ROCK ART IN IRANIAN MAKRAN: APS-E GOALM AND KOUHBODAN-E JOR PETROGLYPHS, QASR-E QAND

Recently, many petroglyph assemblages have been discovered in the southern part of Iranian Baluchistan. This article aims to introduce two assemblages found during a field survey in the Kajou Valley, Qasr-e Qand District. The motifs have been realized by incision or abrasion among which various human, animal and geometric motifs are grouped in hunting or combat scenes. Chronologically, they are not contemporaneous and a stratigraphy of motifs can be traced according to color of the petroglyphs. It is extremely difficult to specify any exact date, but some age estimates have been made based on their stylistic features.

Keywords: *Petroglyphs, Kajou River, Makran, Iranian Baluchistan.*

Introduction

In 2009, an archaeological reconnaissance program was conducted by the authors in the southern Makran (Gedrosia of Greek texts), in the southeast of Iran. During the program, besides locating archaeological sites on behalf of the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research (ICAR), several petroglyph assemblages were discovered in the narrow Kajou Valley (approximately 60 km long) situated in the north of the Qasr-e Qand district in Sistan and Baluchistan Province (Fig. 1). Here, two rich petroglyph assemblages, i.e. Aps-e Goalm and Kouhbodan-e Jor, will be presented. These two sites are located at an altitude between 617 to 636 meters above sea level in the mountainous areas of Chanf and Qasr-e Qand. Each assemblage comprises a large number of collective or individual motifs engraved on the surface of dark/brown varnished cliffs illustrating a strong diversity including human, animal, and geometric representations. As the rock engravings of Kajou Valley were created in the open-air, the damage to them was massive. Not only has erosion played a major role in destruction of rocks and cliffs containing petroglyphs, but also human action can be considered as a destructive element (through imitating and creating of new engravings on the ancient petroglyphs or road construction activities).

Environmental setting

Located in southeastern Iran, Sistan and Baluchistan province covers an area of 181,578 km. The greater part of this province, Baluchistan, is a vast and arid land with low human population density. The area of this

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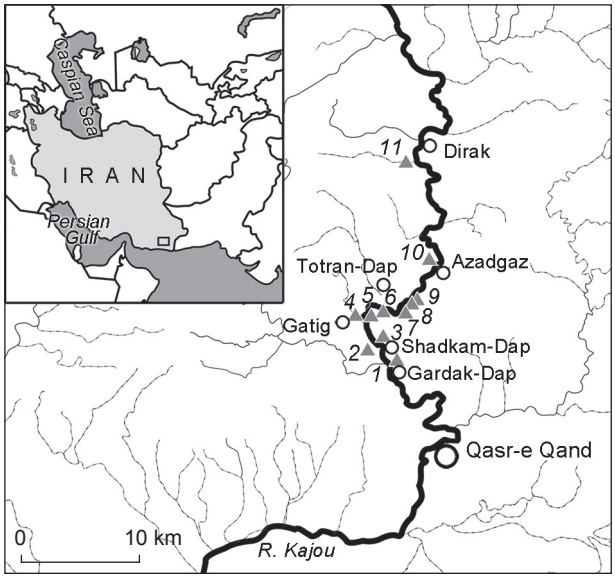

Fig. 1. Geographical location of petroglyphic sites around the Kajou Valley, southern Makran.
1 – Deskigan; *2* – Aps-e Goalm; *3* – Kouhbodan-e Jor; *4* – Kaushpad; *5* – Gatig 1; *6* – Gatig 2; *7* – Totran-Dap 1; *8* – Totran-Dap 2; *9* – Totran-Dap 3; *10* – Azadgaz; *11* – Dirak.

study comprises the rocky valley of Kajou River (locally Kajeh) situated to the north of Qasr-e Qand city. The topography of southeastern Iran is characterized by very tight folding of the rock layers in different directions. From physiographical point of view, the Makran region is formed by the Zagros system including the system of ridges constituting the interior hills of Makran and coastal ranges (Fisher, 1968: 81). Geologically speaking, the Makran region is less known comparing to other parts of Iranian Plateau (Falcon, 1974; McCall, 2002). In the southern part of Nikshahr and Qasr-e Qand districts, the mountains are made up of roughly east-west oriented ranges composed of Cenozoic sedimentary rocks with a sedimentary *melange* characterizing the general altitude of the sharp crested summits between 1000 to 1300 m. These peaks are separated from each other by narrow, deep valleys due to the direction of south/west flowing rivers and their tributaries. In the Kajou Valley the folds are constituted of gypsum, limestone, and sandstone (of different ages) abundant in the Qasr-e Qand unit (McCall, Eftekhar-Nezhad, 1993: 35). According to McCall, they can be dated back to Oligocene-Miocene series (McCall, 1985: 131).

Southern Makran is extremely hot and arid in the summer. Rainfall is low and rarely exceeds 100–130 mm per year. Regarding rainfall rhythms of the region Fisher indicates "…most of this tends to fall as violent downpours on a very few days, entirely between October and April. Because of the generally impermeable character of the rock series—either through lava flows or metamorphism—the effects of rainfall tend to be soon dissipated by rapid runoff; and it is only in relatively few areas, where permeable series exist on a larger scale (or where accumulation of water can occur as a lens in a blanket of detritus), that agriculture and human settlements can develop" (Fisher, 1968: 84).

Fig. 2. General view of Kajou Valley, Qasr-e Qand.