



Khra Hanjiran Rock art (north-west of Iran)

by Sirvain Mohammadi Ghasrian* and Rahmat Naderi**

ABSTRACT

The petroglyphs found in Khra Hanjiran site (north-west of Iran), which is located 28 km South of Mahabad city, could be considered among the main rock art evidences in North- Western Iran.

Khra Hanjiran petroglyphs represent a series of animal and human figures was discovered in 1966 by M. Pedram and published briefly in the 1990's.

Recently, the authors had the opportunity of carrying out a comprehensive analysis on the site, and has conducted a detailed record of them. All motives are found on two separate rock boulders of schist stone, whose surfaces are relatively flat, providing a good substrate for carving. Most of the panels shows motives including ibexes with long and curved horns, human figures characterized by long hands, horsemen at riding, as well as many geometric patterns and schemes, whose meaning will be investigated in the papers. Moreover, it has to be noted that some recent graffiti are easily distinguishable. The majority of rock carvings have a very low depth and they have been carved in a very schematic way: for instance, the bodies are represented just by simple straight lines. Unfortunately most of the rock boulders have a smooth slope, which had caused rainfall erosion, consuming some of the petroglyphs and, in a few cases, washing them away completely.

The authors suggests also a methodology to investigate the period when the carvings have been done, founding their hypothesis on the well-known direct dating based on the rock varnish. The paper will also include considerations on microscopic analysis aiming at finding out the carving techniques and the tools which are supposed to be used in the site.

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INTRODUCTION

Despite the exceptional density of numerous rock art sites throughout Iran, conducted rock art studies by both Iranian and foreigner researchers are not actually significant resulted Iranian rock art remain poorly known and many fundamental question still receive no answer (Mohammadi 2007) with a glance to the distribution of the known rock art sites on the map of Iran, one can find clearly that there is not a regular distribution pattern among them and a large number of this known rock art clusters are concentrated in center and mainly in western part of Iran (fig 1) open air petroglyphs of Taimareh and Kahak area as well as Galeh Bozi mountain in central Iran (Farhadi 1996; mohammadi2006 and mohammadi in press), rock paintings of Kuh Dasht regoin (Izad Pnah 1969; Mcburney 1969; Garajian et all 2002 and Remacle et all 2006), frequent rock carving sites in Kurdistan (Lahafin 2004) and Khreh Henjeran and Hoorand petroglyphs (Pedram 1994 and Rafie Far 2002) in west and north-west part of Iran are considered as a major rock art sites which have been investigated until now.

The petroglyphs found in Khreh Henjeran site (north-west of Iran), which is located 28 km South of Mahabad city, could be considered as one of the main rock art evidences in this part of Iran. Khreh Henjeran petroglyphs represent a series of animal and human figures were discovered in 1966 by M. Pedram and published them in a short report with two unclear photos (Pedram 1994).

Recently, the authors had the opportunity of carrying out a comprehensive analysis on the site, and have conducted a detailed record of them. In the present note we attempt to investigate Khreh Henjeran petroglyphs in a complete way.

DESCRIPTION OF ROCK ART

As I noted before Khreh Henjeran rock art are located 28 km south of Mahabad city, beside Mahabad -Sardasht Road in western Azerbaijan province (fig 1). They are 1330 meters above the sea level.

Climate of the region is cold as well as mild mountaineer, its average annual temperature is 11.7 to 13.3 degrees and the amount of annual rain is 700 mm. As we go from the southern part of the western Azerbaijan province towards the eastern part, the amount of humidity is reduced. Consequently the amount of its vegetation is reduced too; the vegetation covering of Mahabad territory is steppe and semi-steppe, while other parts of the province (particularly southern area) are covered with jungle. From the penology point of view the soils of this region are lime litho-cell and its brown fertile soil providing a good condition for agricultural activities (Khezri 2000).

All motives of Khreh Henjeran petroglyphs are found on two separate rock boulders of schist stone, whose surfaces

Are relatively flat, providing a good substrate for carving. Most of the panels show motives including ibexes with long and curved horns, human figures characterized by long hands, horse men at riding, depiction of fox as well as some geometric patterns and schemes, whose meaning will be remain in ambiguous. Moreover, it has to be noted that some recent graffiti are easily distinguishable. The majority of rock carvings have a very low depth and they have been carved in a very schematic way: for instance, the bodies are represented just by simple straight lines. Unfortunately most of the rock boulders have a smooth slope, which had caused rainfall erosion, consuming some of the petroglyphs and, in a few cases, washing them away completely (fig 2 and 3). As I mentioned all motives have been grouped in two main sectors. Since the lower parts of the rock surface of main group is relatively rough the engraved figures on it have been carved mostly on the middle and upper part. There are also A few schematic figures on the surface of small rock boulder not in a far distance with the main group of Khreh Henjeran rock art (Fig 4 and 5).

The human figures of Khreh Henjeran rock art have been depicted in a similar style. Their feet and hands have been shown completely open and evidently there is an instrument like dagger or sword in their hands. It seems that they are running or following some thing and we can distinguish most probably a hunting scene.

In addition to the human figures, a series of animal figures like ibexes, horse man rider and depiction of long tail animals that it seems to be the figure of fox are distinguishable. One of this long tail figures have been carved lees precisely and one can not make a distinction between different parts of the body of animal. It should be noted that even nowadays the local inhabitation of Khreh Henjeran area are really interested in hunting of fox. With a general view to the Iranian rock art it becomes clear that Khreh Henjeran petroglyph has not introduce any innovative motive and that figures which can be found are mostly common for rock art in Iran which led to essential question a bout the interpretation of Iranian rock art (Mohammadi in press).

Different technique used in carving of rock art, existence of dissimilar amount of rock coating (patina and varnish) on the surface of rock art and ... proves that Khreh Henjeran petroglyph have been carved in different times and that a uniform Chronology for all rock carvings is obviously wrong. Apart from the depiction of dagger and sword that some one can date them at least to the Bronze Age (if we have an accurate

perception of this motives), Khreh Henjeran petroglyphs are entirely lack the possibility for estimation of their exact. Time of carving

DISCUSSION

In spite of richness and prevalence of rock art sites throughout Iran and as it clear from previous researches, conducted studies are widely short run and dispersed indicating numerous uncertainties like; Necessity of consistent chronology, lack of reasoned interpretation of rock arts, inadequate information on the technique and tool used in creating rock arts and... have exits and received no answer. In general Dating and interpretation of rock art can be considered as two main difficulties in relation to Iranian rock art studies. The other researchers used some iconographic evidence for estimation of date. For example the rock paintings of Kuh Dasht area (McBurney 1969) and prevalence rock carving site of Kurdistan (Lahafin 2004) have been dated to the first millennium B.C based on the depiction of horse figures. Surely using these documents can not show the exact time of making rock art and maybe they have created before or after mentioned era. We can conclude that only utilization of the engraved pictures is not a proper method for the chronology, it does not precisely refer to the exact date of engraved pictures. Instead of it Consideration on microscopic analyses aiming at finding out the carving technique and tool which are supposed to be used in making rock art, micro erosion studying of rock surface, investigation the deepness of rock carving and their longevity and stability on different kind of stone in different environment according with taphonomic logic (Bednarik 1994a) evaluate the mineral assertion deposited on the surface of rock art in favor of direct dating (Watchman 2000).and application other relevant scientific methods which have been used currently in rock art studies we can obtain more inclusive insight a bout Iranian rock art chronology.

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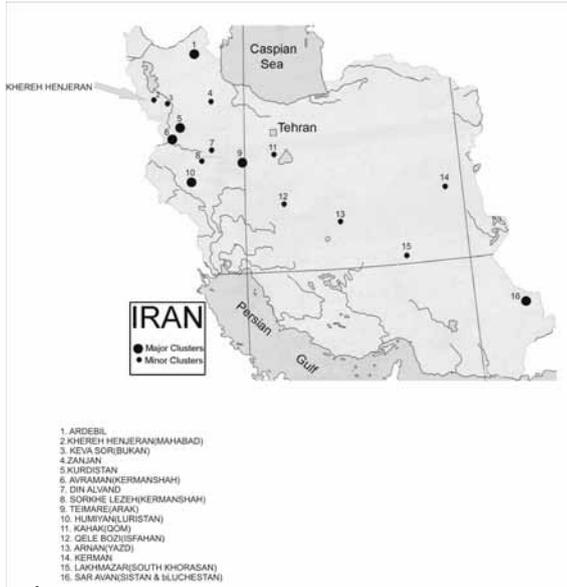


fig. 1



fig. 2

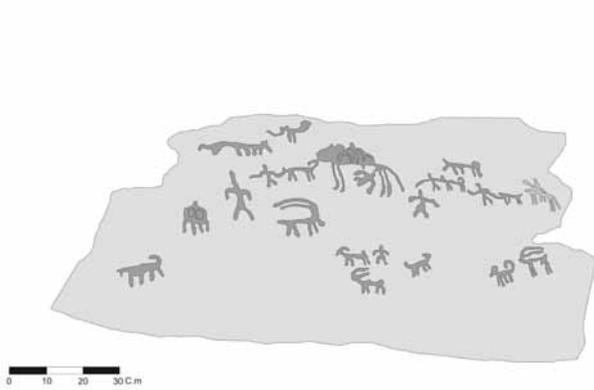


fig. 3



fig. 4

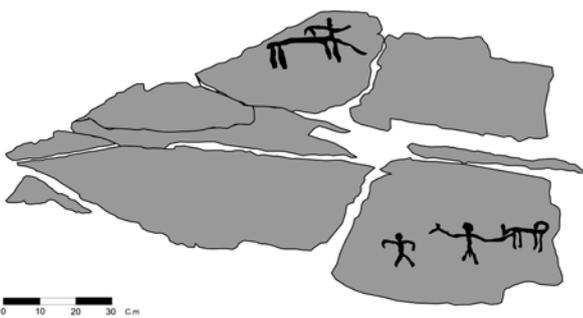


fig. 5

Fig 1. map of Iran, showing the distribution of the main known rock art site with location of Khereh Henjeran petroglyph in north-west of country.

Fig 2. View of the main group of Khereh Henjeran rock art.

Fig 3. Sketch of the main group, only identifiable rock art have been drawn.

Fig 4.view of the second group of Khereh Henjeran rock art.

Fig 5. Sketch of the second group of Khereh Henjeran rock art.