



FROM STONE TOOLS TO STEEL TOOLS: ETHNOGRAPHIC PETROGLYPHS IN SINDH, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT - Sindh, the southern province of Pakistan, is home to a number of rock-art sites. Many rock-art sites have been found in northern Pakistan but recent discoveries about rock-art by the present author open new avenues of the prehistory and history of the region. Rock-art sites are mainly located in three mountain ranges of Khirthar, Bado and Lakhi in Sindh. Both petroglyphs and pictograms have been found in these ranges. Chronologically, these petroglyphs and pictograms belong to prehistoric and historic periods. The tradition of making images on the rocks still continues in Sindh. This paper deals with the present-day petroglyphs that people continue to make. The motifs that appear on the rocks will also be discussed in the paper. The techniques of making these present-day petroglyphs will also be a point of discussion of this paper.

RIASSUNTO - Il Sindh, provincia meridionale del Pakistan, ospita numerosi siti di arte rupestre. Molti di questi sono stati rinvenuti nelle regioni settentrionali del Paese, ma recenti scoperte a tal proposito realizzate dall'autore dell'articolo stanno aprendo nuove vie alla conoscenza della preistoria e della storia dell'area. I siti sono principalmente collocati su tre catene montuose del Sindh: Khirthar, Bado e Lakhi, dove sono stati rinvenuti sia petroglifi che pittogrammi. Dal punto di vista cronologico, i petroglifi e i pittogrammi sono databili a periodi storici e preistorici. L'usanza di realizzare immagini sulle rocce è ancora praticata ai giorni nostri nel Sindh. L'articolo tratterà appunto dei petroglifi che le persone continuano ancora oggi a creare. Inoltre, saranno discussi anche i motivi che compaiono sulle rocce. In fine, un ulteriore spunto di dibattito verrà offerto dalla trattazione delle tecniche utilizzate per realizzare questi petroglifi contemporanei.

INTRODUCTION

Rock carvings are found in different parts of Pakistan (Jettmar 2002, Dani 1983, Olivieri and Vidale 2004, Mughal, 1999, Hayat 2001, Kalhoro 2010, 2011). A large number of rock-art sites are located in the Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan (Dani 1983, 1995, Jettmar 1988, Jettmar and Thewalt 1987, Hauptmann 1989). Sindh is the second-largest rock-art region in Pakistan (Kalhoro 2009, 2010, 2011). This region is also home to a large number of modern rock-art types which are not found in other parts of Pakistan.

Drawing pictures on the rock is still the pastime of the shepherds in hilly regions of Sindh. The shepherds spend most of their time taking their herds from one pasture to another and from one *kumb* (natural depression in the river bed where water accumulates) to another. From morning to noon, the shepherds remain with their herds. When the sun starts blazing at noon in hot summers, the shepherds take shelter under a tree or rock shelter. While taking a rest under a tree near a camp or rock shelter, they amuse themselves with pictures which they draw on the rock. Not only shepherds but also the travellers who travel from Balochistan to Sindh or from upper valley to lower valley also make engravings when they take a rest after a long journey. This paper is a discussion of the motifs that these travellers, members of settled and mobile population and shepherds make on the stone.

MOTIFS

The modern petroglyphs are quite different from the prehistoric. The majority of the prehistoric motifs include hunting scenes. The hunting scenes still appear in the present-day petroglyphs but they are mostly dated with a name of an artist. Another difference is the technique and type of weapons shown in the petroglyphs. The depicted weapons are shotguns and rifles. I discuss below various motifs that appear in the modern rock-art of Sindh.

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Weapons

There are a large number of modern weapons that people have engraved on boulders, cliffs and walls of rock shelters. All of these weapons are still kept by the local population for their security and protection. They include hand-held small-calibre firearms, usually handguns, shotguns, rifles and semi-automatic and full-automatic weapons. A variety of small pistols and revolvers are also drawn on the boulders and rock walls. They are found as individual figures, in groups or in apparent association with other human and animal motifs. Sometimes, the names of the artists also appear with the depicted weapons. Petroglyphs of muskets are commonly found at a number of rock-art sites. Some of the beautiful petroglyphs of muskets are depicted at the rock-art sites of Sakey Dand. Some anthropomorphs are also shown holding an AK-47, also known as a Kalashnikov. This is commonly found in the valleys of the Khirthar and Bado. Some interesting images are found at the rock-art site of Met Dhoru where two anthropomorphs are depicted holding Kalashnikovs (Fig.1). Such motifs are found in various rock-art sites. Prominent among these are Pehi *kumb*, Chiti in Shakloi and Peroz Buthi. The petroglyphs of the AK-47 are found at Pehi *kumb*. Apart from representations of the AK-47, a variety of pistols and rifles are drawn on boulders, rock walls and bedrock. A large number of such representations of small weapons are drawn on the bedrock of Pehi *kumb* in Angai valley. The artists have also left their names along with the depicted motifs of weapons. More interesting are the drawings of the axes which are found in association with shotguns and handguns. The axe is a weapon of a shepherd who has drawn it everywhere in the valleys of Angai and Mol. It reflects his identity which he has shown in the engravings on the boulders, rock walls and bedrock. He has also left his name while drawing an axe, showing that such-and-such axe belongs to such-and-such shepherd. For example, there is a great variety of axes at Lahaut rock-art site in the Mol valley, which lies 40 km north-east of Karachi city. Every drawing shows the name of the artist (Fig.2) One of the axe petroglyphs shows that this is the axe of Burfat. Another image shows the name of Aslam, who drew a picture. There is a total of 20 axe petroglyphs with the names of the artists. The axes have both long and short handles. The axe with a short handle is used by small shepherds who always accompany their elder brothers or fathers. The long-handled axes apparently belong to older members of the pastoral community. One of the distinctive features of the axe petroglyphs is that they are found together with palm prints of the same artists who made axes. The shepherds appear to have made both axes and palm prints with their signatures at the same time (Fig.3).

Axe petroglyphs are found at other rock-art sites but without the signatures of the artists. There are a number of such axe drawings on Peroz Buthi (a hillock) rock-art site.

Hand, foot and shoe motifs

Hand, foot and shoe prints are a universal phenomenon found in almost all rock-art regions of the world. They are depicted in different contexts and with different contents. In Sindh, petroglyphs of hand, foot and shoe prints are located in large numbers. The earliest petroglyphs of hand prints are depicted on the walls of cave and rock shelters which mostly belong to the prehistoric and protohistoric periods. The petroglyphs of the early historic period are found on rock walls.

The modern hand petroglyphs are drawn on the bedrock which are located near *kumbs* where shepherds take their herds for water. Here one finds a large number of hand prints. Hand prints are found along with foot and shoe prints. A large number of hands and feet are found in the rock-art site of Pehi *kumb*. Both the petroglyphs of hand and foot are found as individual figures and in groups. More recent petroglyphs of hand and foot prints are located at Lahaut rock-art site, where one finds hand prints with the names of the artists. Each of the drawing carries the names of the artist in the local Sindhi language. One of the hand petroglyphs carries the name of Abdullah. Another hand petroglyph bears an inscription which reads as "this is the hand of Muhammad Ilyas". Still another reads "this is the hand of Qadir Burfat". These hand petroglyphs are found associated with drawings of a star, axe and animal footprints. The animal foot prints are the earliest, whereas those of stars and axe are modern.

Some hand petroglyphs are also found at Chiti rock-art site in Makhi valley in the Khirthar Range. There are two hand petroglyphs without the signatures of the artists. All these petroglyphs are found associated with modern carvings of animals (Fig.4). They are found on a triangle-shaped boulder. Another nearby boulder depicts a modern petroglyph of hand along with an inscription accompanied by a carving of a bus.

In some locations, footprints occur in association with hand prints and other motifs. Footprints appear to be memorial signs marked by the travellers, shepherds and the local population living near the rock-art sites. Some footprints also appear to be associated with sacred sites. These sacred sites are frequented by the local population. The earliest depictions of footprints are associated either with demons or saints. This depends on the composition of footprints. Some footprints occur in groups and the others in individual figures. In some

locations, footprints are drawn in such a way as if some people were walking over a boulder. In this case footprints are drawn on a boulder in a vertical position, showing that these are the footprints of the demons. The local population believes that these are the footprints of the demons.

The modern foot petroglyphs also occur with the ancient footprints which are easily identified by the patination and inscriptions. Almost all the footprints bear the names of the artists. In some locations, footprints are found along with shoe prints. There are also several shoeprints which are made by the shepherds, travellers and the local population. There is a great variety of shoeprints which occur on vertical, semi-horizontal and horizontal surfaces.

Transport motif

Transport petroglyphs are found at several rock-art sites in Sindh. The transport petroglyphs can further be divided into land transport and air transport.

Land transport

It is really amazing to see a large number of land transport petroglyphs in some rock-art sites in the Khirthar Bado and Lakhi ranges. Land transport includes representations of both light and heavy vehicles. Some of the more refined transport petroglyphs are found at Pehi *kumb*. There are a total of 21 land transport petroglyphs. The artists have drawn almost every vehicle that he has observed around. Some interviews from the artists reveal interesting information. Most of the transport drawings were made when the artists first saw them in their locations. The others were observed when the artists went to cities and towns. They observed transport there and after return to their villages they drew them on bedrocks, boulders and menhirs. They have made trucks which they observe in their valleys. One of the best drawings of a truck is found at Pehi *kumb* in Angai valley (Fig.5). Another beautiful carving of the truck has been observed on the fallen menhir near Gadap in Karachi. Likewise, the petroglyphs of buses and lorries are also found at a few rock-art sites. One of these is at Pehi *kumb* where one finds two petroglyphs of a bus. One of the bus petroglyphs is more beautiful than the other. A few bus petroglyphs have also been observed at two locations in Makhi valley. There are three petroglyphs at the first location. This location is locally called Chiti. The bus petroglyphs occur on boulders and the rock wall. There are also car petroglyphs at the Chiti rock-art site. Both figures are drawn on the rock wall. One of the figures is superimposed with a carving of a camel. The second location, Khargazani, which is just 300 m away from Chiti rock-art site, also depicts three bus carvings.

Interestingly, the images of trailers are also found at Pehi *kumb*. There are two petroglyphs at this site. Apart from the carvings of trailers, buses and trucks, petroglyphs of motorcycles are also found in the rock-art of Sindh. There are three rock-art sites where pictures of motorcycles have been observed. Pehi *kumb* rock-art site, which is home to a number of land petroglyphs, also includes pictures of motorcycles. There are two drawings of motorcycles on the bedrock at Pehi *kumb*. According to local people, these belong to Rustam Marri and Muhammad Jamali respectively. Muhammad Ilyas was the first person in the valley of Angai to purchase a motorcycle. He bought it in 1988. When he brought it to the valley people were stunned, because before nobody had ever seen a motorcycle in the valley. Later, in 1997, Rustam Marri bought a motorcycle. The images of motorcycles were drawn by the local artists who first observed them. Nowadays, there are nine more motorcycle pictures in the Angai valley. The first encounter with modern machines was very surprising for a few people in the remote valleys of Khirthar. This also happened in Nali valley: when the first motorcycle came to the valley people saw it with awe. Some people drew pictures of the motorcycles on bedrocks and boulders. A few images were drawn on bedrock at Kalri in Nali valley (Fig.6). These drawings were made in 1987.

Apart from Angai and Nali valleys, a few images also occur on the fallen menhirs in Gadap valley in Karachi. One such is located near Thohar Kanaro. This menhir depicts a motorcycle with a rider. This image was made by Hussain Kanaro in 2004.

Air transport

Carvings of aircrafts and helicopters are found in the rock-art of Sindh. There are two rock-art sites, Pehi *kumb* and Khaval where one finds the petroglyphs of aeroplane and choppers. The artists have drawn both the passenger aircraft and a fighter jet that frequently flies over the mountain ranges of Sindh. There are three petroglyphs of aircrafts and one of a chopper at the rock-art site of Pehi *kumb*. Interestingly, carvings of two Fokker planes occur on Pehi bedrock. Close to these petroglyphs is a picture of a fighter jet. The petroglyph of a chopper occurs on the same panel (Fig.7). All the petroglyphs of air transport are found in association with hand and footprint motifs, anthropomorph motifs and geometric motifs.

Two petroglyphs of an aeroplane and a chopper are also located at the Khaval rock-art site, which lies 40 km north of Pehi *kumb* rock-art site. Both are carved on the rock wall. The Khaval rock-art site is very close



to the Khaval pass, which leads to the famous hill station of Gorkh, which rises to 5700 ft. The rock-art site of Khaval is located at the altitude of 3427 ft. Both petroglyphs of chopper and aeroplane are found in association with animal and geometric motifs.

Animal motif

The bull and ibex petroglyphs are the earliest. Camel pictures are also found in early historic and historic periods. Bull, ibex and camel appear in present-day petroglyphs. Ibex and camel pictures are numerous in present-day petroglyphs. The ibex is shown either as an individual figure or in groups. Sometimes, hunters are shown hunting ibex with shotguns. Some ibex figures are shown grazing, with dates and signatures of the artists. One such petroglyph is located in Chiti Khoh in Sallari valley. This petroglyph shows an ibex and a goat with a plant and the name of the artist and a date. Interestingly, the cell numbers of the artists are also found near the petroglyph. This petroglyph was made in 2001 (Fig.8).

The petroglyphs of camels are also numerous in present-day petroglyphs. Camels are shown either with or without a rider. They are depicted in a row or in a group. One such a row of camels is found at Loi *kumb* in Jatim Dhoro in Gaj valley. There are 12 camels in a row. Another row of camels with riders is found at Loi Diref rock-art site in Makhi valley.

Stag petroglyphs also appear in present-day rock carvings. One finds a petroglyph of a stag with an inscription which reads “this is my stag” (Fig.9). This petroglyph is found in Makhi valley. Pictures of deer, wild cats, lions and leopards also appear in the present-day rock-art of Sindh. The petroglyphs of wild cats are numerous in Zeni Dhoro in Nali valley which were made some years ago. Local people know the artists who made the carvings of the wild cats.

Some animals are shown being hunted with guns. One such modern petroglyph made by Sharif is found in Gaptar valley. This is a leopard being hunted by Sharif, who is a famous hunter in the Nali valley. He has drawn his picture at this site. Close to this petroglyph is another hunting scene. This shows two ibex being hunted by a hunter with a gun. In modern petroglyphs guns and rifles are used for hunting animals. Group hunting scenes are also found in modern petroglyphs. Although this is an ancient motif it continues to appear in present-day petroglyphs. Trapping group hunting scenes are numerous in Gaptar valley. There is a total of six trapping hunting scenes in which a leopard is trapped by a group of hunters. They are always shown with rifles and guns. The medieval period trapping hunting included swords. The earliest trapping group hunting petroglyphs are found at Khotho and Zeni, in which a leopard is seen being hunted with spears.

Bird motif

Birds are also numerous in the rock-art of Sindh. One finds a rock carving of a peacock at the Lahuat rock-art site. The name of the artist is also found with the petroglyph of a peacock. Another bird is drawn close to an image of a peacock. Some bird petroglyphs are also found in Angai valley. There are three pictures of birds on Topi *khoh* (rock). Some birds are shown with a plant. This motif of birds with a plant is commonly found in many rock-art sites of Sindh.

Moon and star motif

This motif is commonly found in many rock-art sites. Moon and star petroglyphs are found in association with other modern petroglyphs. At Gaptar, this motif occurs with petroglyphs of wild cats and a bull. It is also located at Chiti rock-art site in the Nali valley (Fig.10). Some drawings of moon and stars can also be seen in the Makhi valley. More refined petroglyphs of moon and stars are also found in Zahargani Dhoro in the Gaj valley.

Sometimes, the star is depicted as an individual figure. The petroglyph of a star is found in the rock-art sites of Kalri Talhar, Chiti, Lagani Leig, Zahargani Thal, Winder Dan and Chiti Sha.

Floral motif

A variety of flowers and plants are also found in the various rock-art sites. They are shown with or without the names of the artists. A few flower petroglyphs are found at the Lahaut rock-art site in Karachi District. All these are drawn on Lahaut Buthi without the signatures of the artists. They are found in an apparent association with bird and axe motifs.

A variety of plant petroglyphs can also be seen in some rock-art sites. Sometimes, they are engraved as individual figures or in groups or in an apparent association with animals and birds. A few plant petroglyphs are found in Chuchar valley (Fig.11). All of these plants are shown without animals and birds. However, some of the plants are depicted with animals in the valleys of Angai and Sallari. The plants of Sallari are dated petroglyphs. On the contrary, the plant and animal motifs in the Angai valley are without name or date.

Geometric motif

A large number of geometric petroglyphs are also seen in the various rock-art sites of Sindh. The depicted geometric motifs include the cross, circle, rectangle, square and other complex signs.

Religious building motif

These are the petroglyphs of mosques which are also found at a few rock-art sites. Some beautiful mosque petroglyphs can be seen at Kalri Talhar rock-art site in the Nali valley. There are two petroglyphs of mosques at this site. One of the mosques bears an inscription. According to the inscription the drawing of the mosque was made in 1981 (Fig. 12). This is a large mosque with a single dome. The single-dome mosque is flanked by four minarets of equal height. The nearby mosque has the same architecture, but is smaller in size.

TECHNIQUE

The majority of the petroglyphs have been made with steel tools. The steel tools include a variety of knives and axes. A short-handled small axe is used to make drawings. Some petroglyphs have also been made with the aid of a variety of small stone tools. Sometimes both tools are used to make one image.

CONCLUSION

The rock-art of Sindh continues to be a living tradition in Sindh. In the remote mountainous valleys of Khirthar, Bado and Lakhi, drawing pictures on stones is still a pastime for the majority of the population. Most of the modern petroglyphs were made by the shepherds and the artists of the settled and mobile communities in the valleys. A few images have also been made by the travellers.

It has been observed that ancient motifs also appear in present-day rock-art, for instance, hunting scenes. Animal and human figures also appear in modern rock-art, but the location and selection of the modern artists greatly differ from the ancient artists. The majority of the petroglyphs have been drawn on the bedrock. On the contrary, the ancient artists preferred to make drawings in caves, rock shelters and rock walls. Ancient petroglyphs also occur on cliffs.

Both young and old people make drawings. There is also a difference in preference of images. The old people mainly make animal and human pictures, whereas the young draw the images of transport, weapons, flowers and plants. The information culled from the interviews further reveals that older shepherds use mixed tools, stone and axe, to make petroglyphs. The younger ones only use a single tool at a time, a stone, a knife or an axe. There is no apparent reason for the choice of certain type of tools within specified age groups.

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Fig.1 Anthropomorph holding an Ak-47 Kalashnikov at Met dhoro, Gaj Valley



Fig.2 Rock carvings of axes with names of artists and shoeprints at Lahaut rock-art site, Karachi



Fig.3 Petroglphs of hand prints and axe at Lahaut rock-art site, Karachi



Fig.4 Pictures of hand prints and ibex in Makhi Valley



Fig.5 Petroglyph of truck at Pehi kumb, Anagi Valley



Fig.6 Petroglyphs of motorcycles at Kalri Talhar Rock-art site, Nali Valley

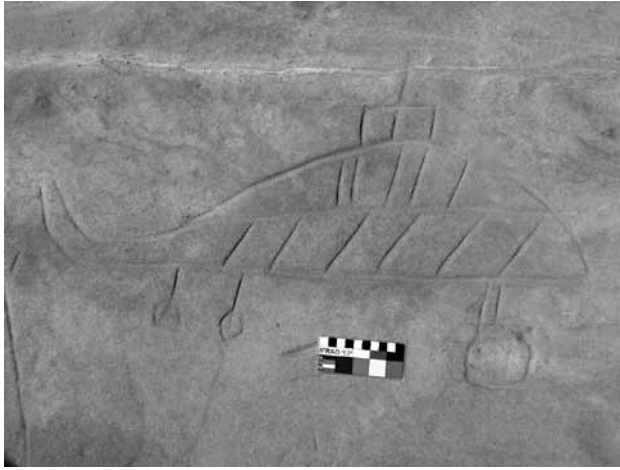


Fig.7 Picture of chopper at Pehi Kumb rock-art site, Angai Valley



Fig.8 Pictures of plant and ibex with a date and the name of the artist in Sallari Valley



Fig.9 Carving of a stag with inscription in Sindh language

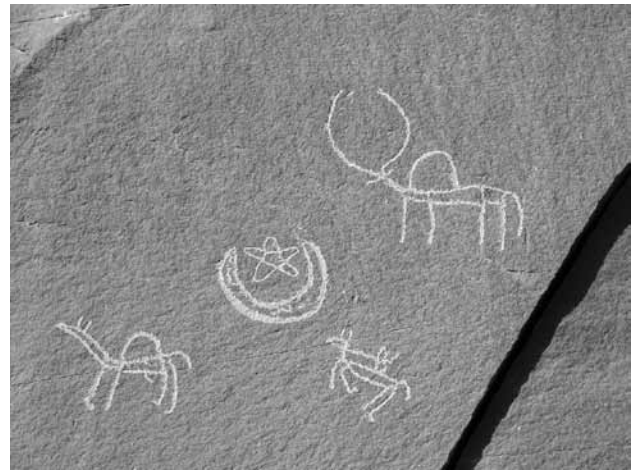


Fig.10 Pictures of camel, bull, moon and star at Gaptar rock-art site, Nali Valley



Fig.11 Drawings of plants and animal in Chuchar Valley



Fig.12 Petroglyph of Mosque at Kalri Talhar rock-art site, Nali Valley

