

Article

Discovering New Rock Paintings at Shmsali and Gorgali Rock Shelters in Kohgiluyeh and Bouyer Ahmad Province, Southern Iran

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Abstract: The Shamsali and Gorgali rock shelters were discovered during an archaeological survey in 2009 at Kohgiluyeh Bouyer Ahmad province, west of Iran. In total, 50 paintings occur at both rock shelters; 21 at Shamsali, and 29 remains at Gorgali rock shelter. The paintings consist of “ibex”, “Predators”, and “riders” in red and black. They are depicted stylistically in singular or plural subjects in profile. In addition, the most numerous images in the Shamsali and Gorgali rock shelters represent “ibex”, comparable with a large numbers of such motifs identified in other regions of Iran. There is no certainty in attributed dates, because we are lacking absolute dating methods.

Keywords: Iran; Kohgiluyeh Bouyer Ahmad; Shamsali; Gorgali; rock painting

1. Introduction

The Pictograms are considered as one of the most notable artistic cultural remains in different fields of study, such as archaeology, history of art, social sciences, *etc.* Although the archaeological remains

of caves and rock-shelters are more widely recognized in the western part of Iran under the current studies, only a few such rock art sites have been discovered so far, all of which are located in the Zagros Mountains. A considerable number of pictograms have been reported from different parts of Iran: Ghar-e Dushe [1–4], Kuhdasht-e Lorestan [5], Homian [6], Eshkaft-e Ahoo [7], Ghar-e Cheshme Sohrab [8], Abdozou Rock Shelter in Firouz Abad [9], Mir Malas in Louriستان [10], Tang-e Tadavan Rock shelter and Tang-e Teyhooee Cave in Fars [11], Kuh-e-Donbeh in Isfahan [12], Helak in Fars province [13], North Khorasan province [14], and a Pictograph of Saravan (Sistan–Baluchistan) [15]. These sites contain plain geometric paintings, zoomorphic (animal-shaped) and human patterns, supposedly dating from the Paleolithic to the Sassanid era [1–8,13–21].

Archaeological investigation of Chin–Loudab in the area of the Bouyer-Ahmad Province were carried out by Hossein Qolami in the spring of 2008 where many archaeological sites were discovered, such as the Rock paintings of Eshkaft-e shamali and Eshkaft-e gorgali. These paintings are sometimes connected to each other (panels) and sometimes as individual figures (motifs).

2. Shamsali Rock Shelter

The Shamsali rock shelter is located at 150 m, northwest of Kamak Nadali Village, suburb of Loudab County, Kohgiluyeh Bouyer Ahmad Province (Figure 1). The rock shelter lies at an altitude of 1913 m and N 3432569 latitude, E 0480795 longitude. The rock shelter floor is smoothly sloped and is at the same level as peripheral fields and its entrance is sloped 45° southwardly. The rock shelter is 9 m deep, 7.50 m wide, and 16 m tall (Figure 2), and opens eastwards. Various motifs are painted on the northern, northeastern, southwestern and western walls of the rock shelter, stylistically or naturally in “zoomorphic” and “anthropomorphic” forms in red and black. In total, 21 motifs were depicted in this rock shelter, which can be classified in two groups by color and location of the depiction. The first groups are red motifs that are located on the northern wall (Figure 3). Most of them are “ibexes” that are depicted singular or in flock. “Ibexes” are shown singly or in groups stylistically in profile position with long curved or jag-shaped horns, “predators” motifs are also shown alongside these motifs. These motifs are also shown stylistically which are observable in “ibex” motifs (Figure 4). Beside the motifs, which were mentioned earlier, there is a stylistic depiction of a horse rider who is hunting in a scene that is related to the other motifs (Figure 5). In the second group, the motifs are stylistically depicted in black paint on the west wall of the rock shelter. As in the first group, the collection is made up of “ibex” and armed horse rider motifs.

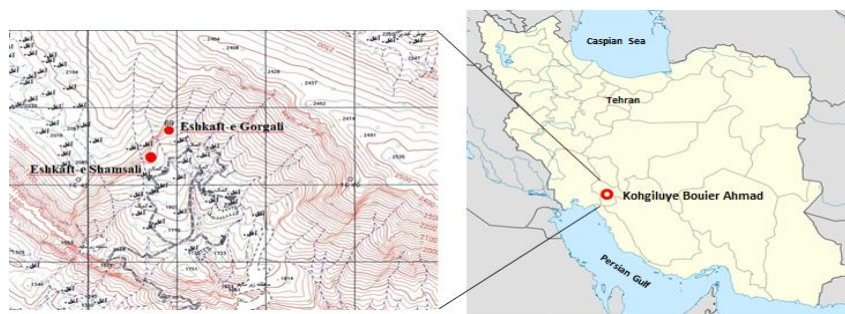


Figure 1. The location of rock shelters in Kohgiluyeh Bouyer Ahmad province.



Figure 2. View of the Shamsali Rock shelter located 150 m northwest of Kamak Nadali Village.



Figure 3. The main group of Pictograms in the Shamsali Rock shelter.



Figure 4. “Ibex” with long and curved or jag horns motifs in the Shamsali Rock shelter.



Figure 5. “Anthropomorphic” motif, “Horse rider” and foot in Shamsali Rock shelter.

3. Gorgali Rock Shelter

The Gorgali rock shelter is located 150 m north of Kamak Tileh Gorg Village in Loudab district of Bouire Ahmad suburb, Kohgiluyeh Bouyer Ahmad Province. Geographically, it lies 1930 m above sea level. The rock shelter is 7.60 m long, 7 m wide and 12 m high (Figure 6). Twenty-nine motifs have been identified inside the rock shelter on its northern, northwestern and western walls. They are black, and highly stylized. Some of the images are more accurate but others crudely show human and animal figures. Most of the motifs of the rock shelter are “ibexes” and “anthropomorphic”; the most important one is a “victorious rider” and people with native cloths similar to those worn today in the area (Figure

7). Among the most important destructions of the reliefs are paginations; some of them are covered in paled sediment formation, and memories written in charcoal.



Figure 6. View of Eshkaft-e-Gorgali.

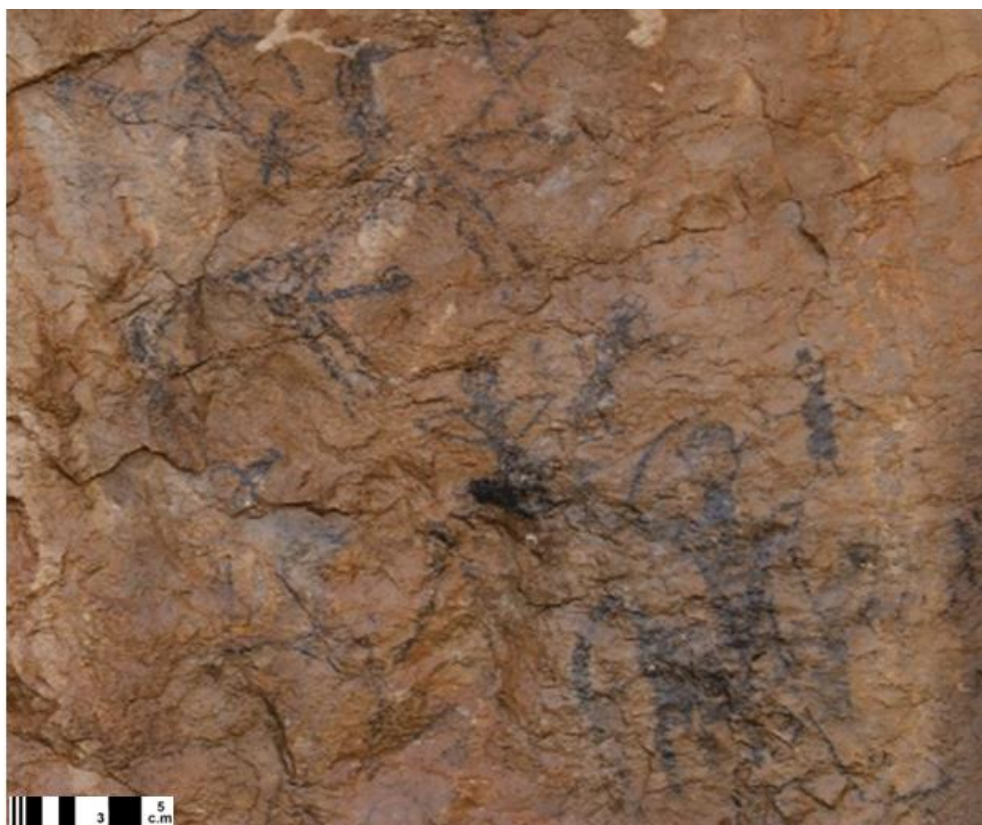


Figure 7. The main group of Pictograms in Eshkaft-e-Gorgali.

4. Conclusions

In view of the small number of identified rock painting sites in Iran, the examination of the paintings of Shamsail and Gorgali rock shelters seems important. The Shamsail and Gorgali rock

shelters with colored motifs were identified on an archaeological survey in Loudab of Kohgiluyeh Bouyeri Ahmad province. Considering that few colored motifs have been identified in Iran, these two rock shelters with color motifs are important. In total, 50 motifs have been identified in these two rock shelters, some of which were painted in red and some in black. The motifs in these two rock shelters are mostly “ibexes” and “anthropomorphic horse riders” which are exposed individually or in a flock. The paintings were presumably made by a hunting community, as several of the scenes illustrate the same subject matter. Some believe that the paintings date back to a pre-Historic period, but dating of the motifs needs laboratory studies which unfortunately cannot be carried out in Iran and therefore a chronology has not yet been presented for colored motifs of this area.

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Author Contributions

All authors have contributed equally to this paper.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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