

## Rock-Art of Mir Malas, Iran

### ART RUPESTRE DE MIR MALAS, IRAN

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#### Abstract

Rock-Art as a pictorial language shows different aspects of ancient life and culture. Pictographs include rock-art; great treasure of fantastic information. Rock-art is formed in ethical and historical concepts. In this study, some new information has been doing served and categorized according to their structure and variety. After recognizing the geographical scope of those drawings on limy stone; they were classified according to their pictures, hunting and hunting animals; then, divided to four groups: human beings, animals tools and unknown pictures included horseman or on foot hunters with arc and arrow, horse riding and on foot men in fighting, sword, arc and arrow, goat, fawn, dog, unknown and unclear drawings. Exaggerated perspicuity in showing bodies and their movements showed fighting and following of hunters to animals easily. So, the most important goal was analyzing their structures and drawings to further studies hope folly.

**Key words:** Kuh-Dasht; Mir Malas; Rock-Art; Pictograph

#### Résumé

L'Art rupestre est un langage pictural qui montre les différents aspects de la vie ancienne et la culture. Les pictogrammes comprennent l'art rupestre; le grand trésor d'informations fantastique. L'Art rupestre est formé dans les concepts éthiques et historiques. Dans cette étude, une nouvelle information a fait servi et classés selon leur structure et de la variété. Après avoir reconnu la portée géographique de ces dessins sur la pierre calcaire, ils ont été classés en fonction de leurs photos, la chasse et

la chasse aux animaux, puis, divisée en quatre groupes: les êtres humains, des animaux et des outils inconnus photos incluses cavalier ou sur les chasseurs à pied à l'arc et la flèche, l'équitation et sur les hommes de pied dans les combats, épée, arc et flèche, de chèvre, fauve, chien, inconnu et dessins peu clairs. Clarté exagérée en montrant les corps et leurs mouvements ont montré la lutte contre et à la suite des chasseurs pour les animaux facilement. Ainsi, l'objectif le plus important a été l'analyse de leurs structures et des dessins à d'autres études espérons folie.

**Mots clés:** Kuh-Dasht; Mir Malas; Art rupestre; Pictogramme

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#### INTRODUCTION

Rock-Art or pre-historical art is valuable source of information in development of human's thoughts in all over the world. Rock-art as some others is used as a tool to express thoughts and beliefs of all groups, cultures and civilizations.

Pre-historical art have created subject's unity and style according to various wonderful symbols in cultures and different periods to show life of hunters and shepherds who created those arts. Inter-related art subjects are completely natural and naturalism. Great numbers of rock-art in all over the world are reasons of ancient creativities. "Rock arts of Kuh-Dasht are similar to found pictures in East Spain; groups of picture under huge rocks in case shape. Finding of broken pottery in that place shows the presence of residents in that part." (Mc Burney, 1969, p.7-8)

"Cave artistic man understood stability of his arts by

using log and burnt branches of trees, latex of plants, animal's oil, clay and water for making colors. Pre-historical men used those primarily equipments and materials to cover their virtual needs in drawing animals' picture in the best way." (Gardner, 1999, p.17-18)

The importance of making pictures is its presence and antiquity in human's life to express their main subjects. Human being started to keep out himself and prepare food by his creativity in hunting; simultaneously, he began to create simple objects surrounded by them. It was the first step of his creativity. Studying of ancient works helps us to know their psychological cultural and social relationships. Nobody could imagine the world in the absence of archeology. Although the presence of artistic works in Iran, lacks of researches and studies have been felt during the time. So, it made some other problems in their keeping and protecting in those manuscripts.

## DISCUSSION

### History of Research

*Hamid Izadpanah*, a researcher who was from Lorestan, found some rock art for the first time, and then in 24 September 1968; some slides of found drawings have been sent to *professor Gershman*. The professor replied in this way: "finding of those drawings in a cave in Kuh-Dasht Lorestan is very important. According to my idea, those pictures related to people who lived in hunting foods period...study in history of Lorestan is very important. That region had an essential role in Assyrians periods in history of Lorestan and those kings used mentioned areas as their fighting places and these kinds of sources are really important." (Izadpanah, 1998, p.315). Then *professor Mac Buorney* the lecturer of Cambridge University did some researches in Mir Malas. According to his idea, "there have been no findings in this sample and way in along of Mediterranean area to India; except few samples in Turkey. He thought those drawings were similar to some findings in East Spain and their antiquity belonged to Paleolithic and Mistral's culture in 40000 year-ago." (Izadpanah, 1998, p.316) In spring of 2003, an archeological committee of a Belgium University came to that area, their leader was *professor Marcel otte*, they found many rock drawings which have not been reported; these are some examples of importance of Zagros mountains.

### Geographical Position of Mir Malas

Mir Malas valley is *Sarsarkh* mountain in west of central part of *Zagros* which continuous until 30 kilometers far for form Lorestan province. Mir Malas valley (Figure 1) has been formed from western and eastern walls that mentioned drawings are on eastern, southern and northern walls. (Figure 2)

Geographical characteristic:

Geographical width: 47/32/174

Geographical length: 33/39/290

Geographical height: 1683 m

Size and dimension of rock: length 35 m, width 4 m, height 3 m.

## METHODOLOGY

By study of Mir Malas area and by looking at the mountain way and nature barriers, we used to common way for rock-art predicate such as photography or copy by hardcover or marker for drawing into the actual scale, after that we transferred results to the computer for survey the pictures exactly that we can develop them into the future analyze, although these results are still incomplete.

### Styles and Patterns of Mir Malas Rock Art

Pictures and drawings on rock and stones are divided to 3 main groups;

-Petroglyph: it means changing stones; including cutting, caving, digging, rubbing, scratching, and etc..

-Pictograph: it means adding any color or material to stone such as drawing and painting by color, coal and etc.

-Geocliff: includes changes and natural phenomena of ground (earth) changing by human kind.

These categories have been seen in all different kinds of rock art in all over the world. First or second style is known in some parts, but third one is more familiar in Iran. Creating of those pictures in Mir Malas is type 2; pictograph; and creator used plain surfaces of lime stone-rock. He used a combination of red soil and water as recent colors; He easily used his fingers to draw those pictures. *Marcel otte* said; "Because of using pictures in those findings, Iranian rock art is unique. Used colors are red or red-brown, sometimes there are black or brown-yellow. Professional lab analysis would be done in their source and identity in near future, but most of those colors belong to that area which shows plenty of Iron-stone with similar colors." (Remacle, Adeli, Lejeune, Mohammadi, & Otte, 2007, p.9-15) After all those researches, one question is remained; how, when and why primitive human do those artistic affairs?

### Analysis of Drawings, Structure

Furthermore, Art or creating an artistic art has been unavoidable part of human's life, knowing ancients and their arts are far from their lives and disciplines. It is clear that subject of local Australians and African Bushmen is hunting animal and local North-American chooses plants as their topic in their artistic activities. Most important part of Mir Malas' drawings is hunting; they hunted animals for their surviving. Their art is a mirror of their life; hunting of animals like mountainous goat by arc and arrow, on horse or foot, alone or in groups. Found drawings in Mir Malas are completely simple and primitive. Their simplicity show that creators created them

with their artistic views to make them easier to understand consciously. They did not pay attention to make disciplines or accepted patterns to receive perfect and purified pictures. Although it was a way to make patterns easier, unconsciously they make them more beautiful to express the meaning of their environment instead of creating beauty. Their material was red color made by red soil to show their thoughts and realities clearly on stony walls.

### Description of Drawings in Mir Malas

Drawings are in this way from right to left:

-The first one is similar to anchor that has a ring in its end and a line with a ring width follows up and ends to two curved crest in two sides. Its size is 16.3 and color is red.

-The picture of a horse man on imaginative creature. Its size is 15.15 and color is red.

-The picture of a cow, its size is 18.15 and color is black.

-The picture of horse man riding, which has an arc and ready to archery. Its size is 14.14 cm and color is black. (Figure 3)

-People who are hunting. Its size is 25.25 cm and color is red.

-A horse man riding to a fawn, his arc is in his hand and fawn is running away and a hunting dog follows to fawn. Its size is 30.5 cm and color is red. (Figure 4)

-A hunter with untidy hair who uses his string of his arc. Its size is 15.10 cm, color is red.

-Two horse ridings follow three fawns. Size of each hunting is frequently 10.38, 13.20, 50.60 cm, size of men is 15.10 cm. Their color is red.

-Hunting's scene is 50.60 cm. eight men have been seen. Their color is red.

-Picture of an animal with long neck, it is similar to giraffe, and role of a man who opened his hands asides. Their sizes frequently are 22.15, 8.4, and 7.4 cm. Their color is red.

-Fighting place with some persons on horse or foot with arc and spear who are fighting together. Its size is 40.40 cm and color is red.

In addition, there are some other black unclear pictures.

### Type and Variety of Pictures

Pictures are divided to four groups: human kinds, animals, tools, and unknown pictures.

*Humans pictures*; there include stand hunter, hunting, or horse man riding on horse or in hunting or fighting. Those are men who hunting wild goats. Fighters or hunters use sword or arc and arrow. Painters showed human by using vertical line with two lines for showing hands and legs, they didn't pay attention to clothes; so, researchers face to lake of information about their clothes. All pictures belonged and showed only man's body not

woman. Finding foods need power and strength so it was men's job, area needed strong fighter as powerful men; then remained pictures show men hunter. Imaginative style and exaggerated way of expressing bodies and movements clearly helped creator to show his subjects of fighting and hunting.

*The pictures of animal*; The most current subjects of those drawings are hunting and wild goat. Male mountainous goat with big and long horn has seen in pictures. The different kinds of animals in those pictures are according to list:

- Mountainous goat (especially with huge horns)
- Fawn
- Dog
- Horse

They were local animals of that area and Iran. Clearly, creators could create everything that had seen; so, those animals were in that region. Wild goat has two different types, the first one with huge, exaggerated horns similar to ram, another one with shorter and smaller ones. (Figure 5)

The presence of horse shows they had trained animals. Some animals are completely unknown.

*The pictures of tool*:

Sword:

In some pictures, humans were hunters and carried sword with him.

arc and arrow:

Horse men riding carry them and used them for hunting.

*Gorden Child* in his book, "man makes himself", mentioned: "all ancients used and invented some simple mechanical tool such as arc and spear ...." (Child, 1973, p.77). Maybe arc was first mechanical tool that was made by human's mind. The power of arc is muscular power which is in arc and then gradually releases saved energy as an arrow. Arc and arrow saved humans; they used them to more powerful animals and hunted some acute animals. This equipment has influenced on the ancient society, maybe invention of arc and arrow was the end of wild life. Arc and arrow, and quiver are the most popular tools among rock arts of Mir Malas.

*Unknown pictures*: In shelter of Mir Malas, there is a circle and a line; circle was put vertically over it and horizontal line and curved line were drawn it's down.

The name and usage of that map is unknown. Although it was called amulet, there were some pictures of hunting, horse and mountainous goat that could show any symbol or sign. Solving of that riddle will need more studies. The way of solving these kinds of riddles will be published in an article by another. Mentioned picture is similar to hook which was used to their hunting. (Figure 6)

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## CONCLUSIONS

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By studying and comparing Mir Malas drawings to other

parts of world, it is clear that they follow same concepts, subjects and signs. According to their similarity, only one important question has been imposed to motivate researchers to research more and more: What happened in the ancient human's mind for creating those drawing?

Rock-art has not been known in Iran completely, it needs more studies and researches. According to studies, Mir Malas drawings follow the main subjects such as hunting and wild hunting animals besides their variety and structure. Understanding and knowing those signs cannot be known without using some similar arcs in other parts by using descriptions, typology, morphology and studying about patterns, designs and similar strictures.

The repetition of those patterns, styles, and creation of pictures clearly show their deep cultural and archeological values. Using public informed and saving these materials are the most important factors and duties to next generation.

### Protection

Saving and keeping out of those arts are really failure. Sun's rays influence on them and fade them gradually. Environmental and natural elements such as weather, heat raining, humans (specially hunters and shepherds ...) by making fire next to those pictures and illegal digging damage those drawings easily.

### Note

As soon as possible, the researcher will publish another article about solving the riddles related to mentioned picture.

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**Figure 1**  
Mir Malas Valley



**Figure 2**  
Eastern Wall Mir Malas



**Figure 3**  
Horse Man Riding



**Figure 4**  
**A Horse Man Riding to a Fawn and Hunting Dog**



**Figure 5**  
**The Goat with Big Horn**



**Figure 6**  
**The Unknown Picture**