

## Some indications of shamanism in Arasbaran rock carvings

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**ABSTRACT** – *Four seasons (1998–2002) of ethnological and archaeological researches in the northern part of the Iranian Azerbaijan have revealed hundreds of carved and scratched drawings and figures on rocks and in subterranean rock-shelters. An anthropological study reveals remarkable information about the situation and the limits of the cultural domains, the cultural relations and the process of cultural diffusion in the prehistory at the intersection of Anatolia, Caucasus, Zagros and the central plateau of Iran. The human and animals figures and signs are contextualized and iconographically interpreted. The animal symbolism is discussed in the contexts of ancient Iran and Caucasus art and tradition.*

**IZVLEČEK** – *Štiri sezone (1998–2002) etnoloških in arheoloških raziskav v severnem delu iranskega Azerbejdžana so razkrile stotine vklesanih in vpraskanih risb in figur na skalah in v spodmolih. Antropološko proučevanje razkriva pomembne informacije o situaciji in mejah kulturnih domen, kulturnih povezav in o procesu prazgodovinske kulturne difuzije na področju Anatolije, Kavkaza, pogorja Zagros in Centralnega iranskega platoja. Človeške in živalske podobe ter znaki so postavljeni v kontekst in ikonografsko interpretirani. Simbolizem smo pretesli v kontekstu staro iranske in kavkaške umetnosti ter običajev.*

**KEY WORDS** – *Arasbaran; Soungoun; Ghegham; Gobustan; Rock Carving; Shamanism; Azerbaijan*

### Introduction

Rock carving art has been found and recognized in at least three fourths of the rocky regions of the world. In ancient times, it seems that rocks were considered as noticeable places for artworks and perhaps for the transmission of significant human messages and concepts to future generations. Qualitatively, such art is unique. Although a large part of it has been lost or not discovered yet, a huge volume of such works have been unearthed and studied. The experts believe that rock-carving art dates to prehistoric communities *i.e.* before the invention of alphabets. Hence, many experts believe it the first and an epoch-making step towards the invention of alphabets. Scholars work on this art for two reasons:

- It is one of the most important documentary instances of human history (especially the prehistoric period). The only and best way to find out the different layers of the human mind's structures and their evolution through time is to study rock-carving art. Moreover, it helps to have a better understanding about the infrastructure of the human mind today.

- As it plays a communicative role by employing symbolic signs which led to the invention of alphabets, scholars have an interest in working on the art.

Emmanuel Anati, a European expert on rock carving art, says: "*Perhaps drawings and rock carvings*

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prior to the invention of alphabets constitute a language with its own grammar and syntax.” (Anati 1998). This Italian expert believes that almost all of the prehistoric arts concentrated on three main subjects: sexual matters, food and territory (*ibid.*). It seems that the human being’s concerns have not changed a lot through history.

The assemblage of Arasbaran rock carvings is a huge and precious volume of rock carving art in this region, and one of the most distinctive assemblages of its kind identified in Iran. The reason for the significance of the drawings is the thematic distinction used in this assemblage in comparison with others in Iran.

This assemblage is dispersed over a wide area from the north of Iranian Azerbaijan and at least two provinces of Ardabil and Eastern Azerbaijan. It can be divided into three sub-assemblages:

- ❶ The assemblage of Soungoun-Varzaghan in Ghoushaghdash Mountains (region of Ahar);
- ❷ The assemblage of Hourand-Laghlán and Kalibar (region of Arass);
- ❸ The assemblage of relics of Razi-Gay Baglou and Hajj Hussein Countryside (in environs of Meshkinshahr) (Fig.1).

As the present article is too short to introduce all the works, only the assemblage of Soungoun is presented, because it is the most important one and perhaps contains the greatest variety of drawings in this region (Rafifar 2002).

The main objective of the article is to analyze and comment as far as possible on the function of such drawings. These drawings have been studied in a field research operation. Research in the field shows that the oldest and richest ones are on the rocks situated in the Ghoushaghdash Mountains close to the copper mine of Soungoun. This article targets and deals only with the assemblage at Ghoushaghdash.



**Fig. 1. Iran and Central Asia region (area where carvings discussed in the text are found).**

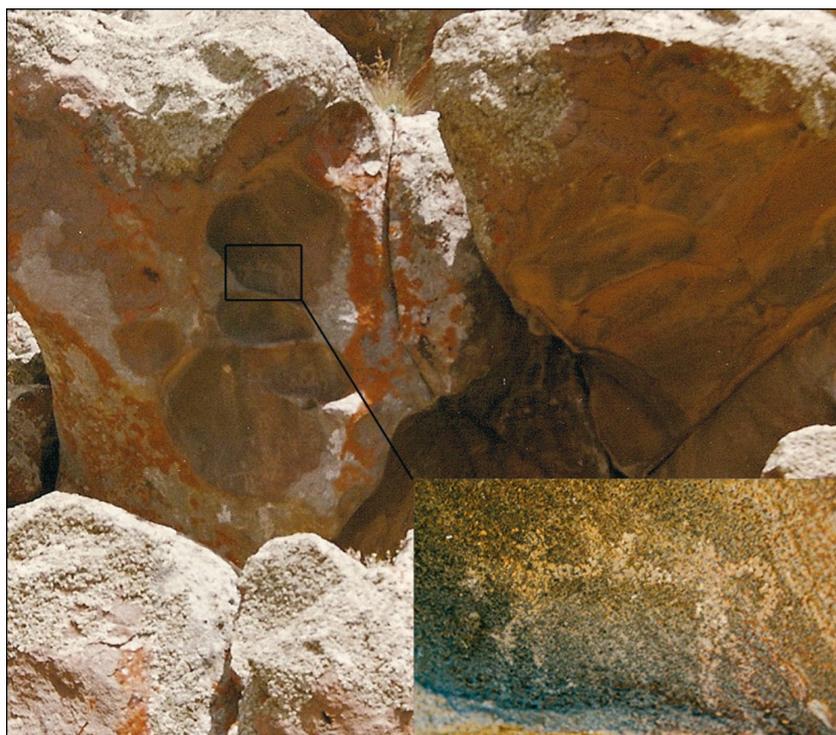
The latter assemblage contains hundreds of carvings and paintings, which can be divided into three groups:

❶ The first group, and the smallest in number of drawings, comprises a few human and animal images. They are located at the beginning of Ghoushaghdash Rocks. There are three natural shelves lying over each other vertically that are incised with some drawings (Fig. 2).

The main feature of this part is the conventional gestures in the human drawings. Two human beings stand face to face (Twins) and each of them has raised one of his hands in the opposite direction toward the other man. There are drawings of what appear to be ibex on each of these shelves.

❷ The second group of drawings is in a stone shelter (Soungoun) and its surrounding rocks. This assemblage comprises a unique collection of hundreds of drawings: human beings (all in conventional and repetitive gestures), as well as animal drawings (mainly ibex, deer, gazelle and snake), and finally a series of signs cover the walls and ceiling of the shelter and neighboring cliffs on a regular basis (Figs. 3, 4 and 5).

❸ The third group of drawings has been identified at a distance of tens of meters beneath another small shelter. Women in dancing in pairs or groups can be seen in all of these drawings (Fig. 8). Unlike men,



**Fig. 2. The first part of Soungoun assemblage (figures of twins).**

their clothes are skirts, not pants, and they are raising one hand and keeping the other down, very similar to Sufi costumes and dances. The interesting point here in this small shelter is that, in contrast to the previous shelters, the motif of all drawings is the human being only, and in very few of numbers (approximately 10 drawings) and astonishingly there are no animal drawing.

The precise number of drawings cannot be calculated because damages affected the drawings and as a result they cannot be easily distinguished one from another. Only a part of the drawings is distinguishable and countable. We estimate that they may be more than five hundred drawings spreading over an area of 50 square meters.

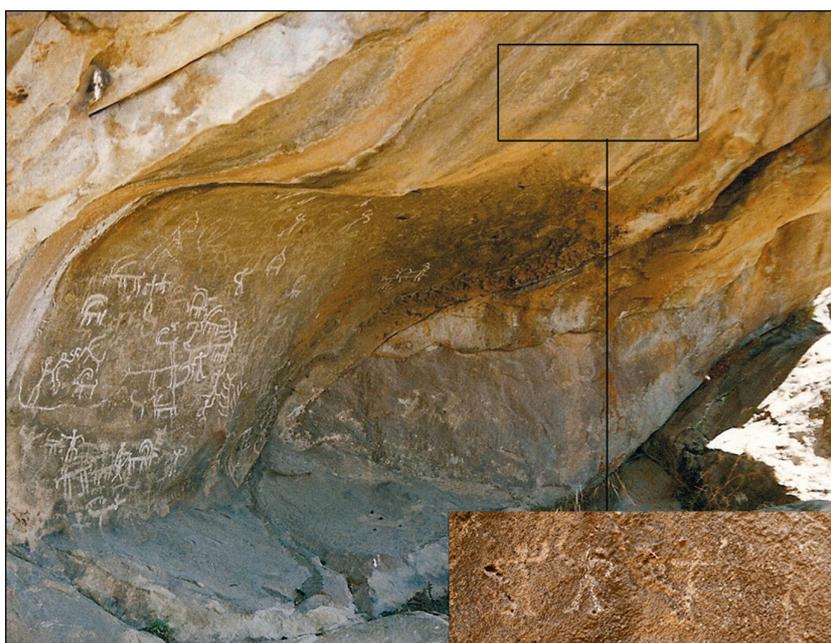
**A glance at the mode of presentation and composition of the main scene in the principle shelter (Soungoun)**

The Twins drawing has been situated at the highest point

of the shelter and right in the center of the scene. This drawing, which has been already mentioned, has been repeated twice in a short space.

It seems that this composition is not only one of the most important, but is also undoubtedly the one possessing the key motif (a symbol of a certain concept) (Figs. 2, 3, 11). The other drawings stand beneath the Twins drawing. In this assemblage, most of the human drawings are similar to the Twins, but in some instances they are sometimes singular and scattered among the animal drawings and sometimes as Twins all over the walls of the principle shelter.

The only painted work in this assemblage seems to be a drawing of a buck. It is painted in ochre and is noticeably bigger than the other drawings (its length is 40 centimetres). The length of other drawings does not exceed 20 centimetres. There are drawings of four men in the four corners of the buck. Each has raised a hand, while the other hand is down (as mentioned before). The latter drawing has been situated in the centre of the scene because of its paramount importance (Fig. 7).



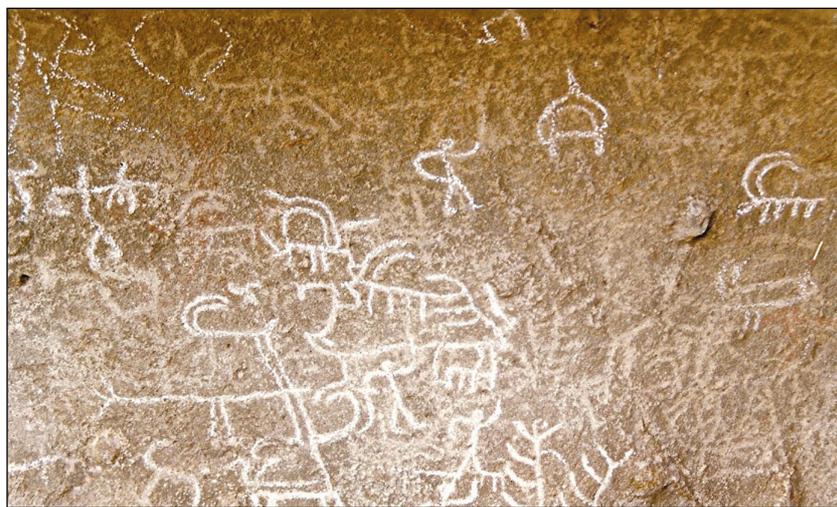
**Fig. 3. The Soungoun principal shelter, general view.**

At first sight, it seems that these men surrounded the animal from four directions, but no sign of hunting can be observed. The composition here shows a ritualistic situation. There are other instances of seven men in the same situation. In one of the drawings that has been carved, it is fairly distinguishable that there is a dagger-like outgrowth on the left side of the men's waist. There are two drawings in which the directions of the dagger-like outgrowths are identical (Fig. 6), and just close to this composition, a drawing comprising a pair of snakes can be distinguished.

Most Soungoun drawings are of ibexes and gazelles. In addition to the animal-human figures, some other conventional drawings can be seen that certainly and meaningfully symbolize something. They have been employed to complete the concepts of different scenes and to convey the ideas much more precisely. Some of these drawings are in the form of crosses and others in a circle and or several circles that interrupt each other. There is a strong probability that all of the drawings in this assemblage are conventional. There might be a few drawings that have been accidentally or by taste carved over there. The style employed and the mode of showing the drawings (figures) in connection to each other are mostly under specific and fixed rules.

On the rocks close to the principle shelter of Soungoun at an inaccessible height, one can easily see noticeable numbers of drawings from animals (mainly ibex) and some from human beings making the above-mentioned gestures (Fig. 5).

Before any analysis and interpretation of the drawings, some considerations should be discussed:



**Fig. 4.** Part of a large, complex panel of the Soungoun principal shelter.

**a.** With regard to the existing information, the composition of scenes in Soungoun drawings has not been seen anywhere else in Iran. Although thousands and thousands of bedrock drawings have been identified all over the country, none of them can be compared with Soungoun in terms of presentation, composition, status and structure of scenes. On the other hand, it should be mentioned that the identified drawings from the northern Iranian border, especially in some instances in Gobustan in the Republic of Azerbaijan (*Abbaszade 1998*), the Geghama Mountains in Armenia (*Martirosian 1981*) and Tamgaly in Kazakhstan (*Ksica 1969*), have meaningful similarities with Soungoun drawings (Figs. 9, 10 and 11).

Therefore, in the latter situation it can be noted firstly that the Soungoun drawings belong to a culture that expanded its territory toward the northern borders, not in the domestic territory (southern regions), and secondly it proves not only a deep relationship between the drawings of the four above-mentioned assemblages, but also absolutely refutes the theory that the drawings could have been by local inhabitants and shepherds for fun. In other words, the scenes of human being + ibex + deer + serpent in similar gestures and styles in all the regions confound any such theory.

**b.** The antiquity of these drawings in all assemblages (Gobustan, Geghama and Soungoun) does not differ from the others, and they had to be from the same period of time and belong to one culture.

**c.** There exist quite different motifs in the Gobustan assemblage in comparison with Soungoun and Geghama (for instance, lion and horse). Therefore, two conclusions can be at the moment put forward:

- The Soungoun and probably the Geghama drawings could be older than some of the drawings of the Gobustan assemblage, as the lion drawing that has been popular in Urartian art and Hittite culture belongs to the near to the end of the second millennium and the early days of first millennium BC. This type of drawing is absent in the Soungoun and Geghama assemblages.



**Fig. 5.** Part of a large complex panel in the Soungoun shelter.

● Not all the Gobustan drawings belong to one period: the Twins and ibex drawings are older than the lion and horse drawings.

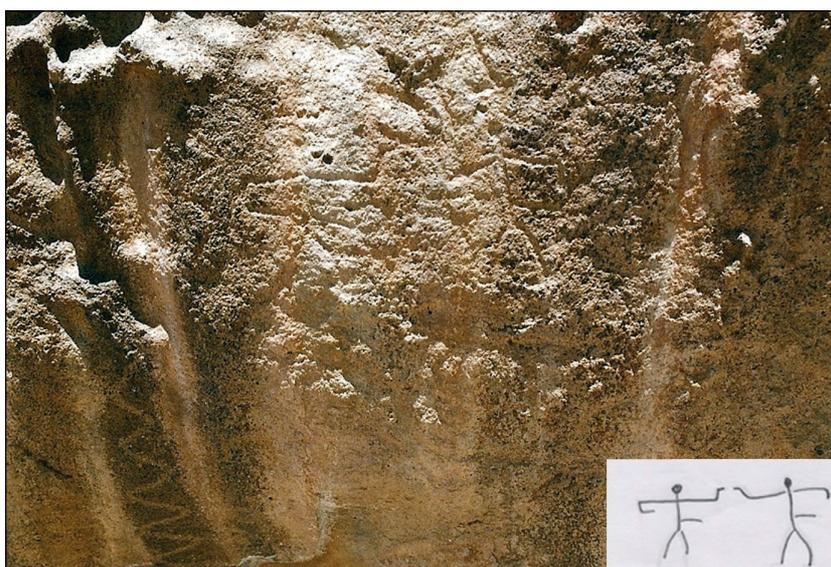
d. The drawings in the Soungoun assemblage are not contemporaneous with the other identified assemblages in the Arasbaran region such as Hourand, the District of Razi, Gay-Baglou and even Dae Mami, which are located at a distance of three kilometers from the Soungoun assemblage, because there is no sign of Soungoun key scenes: the Twins in a special pose, serpent, deer and ibex.

#### Art and its environment

It is necessary to discuss the connection between these artworks and their environment before any analysis of their ideological content.

The natural structure and location selected for presentation of such artworks on bedrocks show a direct connection between such arts with the environment. As the artist

or artists of different times and places followed the same pattern, it shows that they observed the same norms, including the selection of rocks that are fairly smooth and large and that can be carved and scraped. Secondly, they are situated in sites that not only can be easily viewed, but also have been, as much as possible, removed from the impact of climatic changes (wind, rain, etc.). For the same reason, these artworks have been mostly found in ca-



**Fig. 6.** Part of a large complex panel in the Soungoun shelter (twins with daggers).

ves and/or beneath the ceilings and walls of natural bedrock shelters. The artworks under study enjoy most of these norms.

The other noticeable fact is that not all of the people participated in the creation of such artworks. In other words, only some specific persons had to have key roles in this regard.

With regard to the style, techniques, professional qualities, selection of signs and finally the positions and manner of presentation, a small number of people (one or two) had to create the artworks in a short period. The final notion is that these artworks had a public function.

### Semiotics

The differences between these signs indicate an interconnection. Emanuel Anati applies 'syntax' to the manner of connection (the way in which the drawings have been arranged in relation to one another), and 'grammar' to the kind of states and gestures in each drawing. In his opinion, one can identify three categories of sign in most of these assemblages:

- ❶ Pictographs or mythographs that are mostly identifiable representations of real or imaginary objects and animals or human beings. There are many such artworks in the region under study.
- ❷ Ideograms are signs or combinations of repeated signs that have been presented in different ways (circle, cross, branches of tree, star etc.). As has already been seen, it can be confirmed that the Soungoun assemblage includes such ideograms. There are many drawings of crosses, intersecting circles and some specific signs.
- ❸ Psychographs that are neither signs nor resemble any object. Anati believes that these drawings were created as a result of an abrupt psychological discharge and or expression of emotions about life or death, love or hatred, and or any other notions of this kind (1998). As such drawings can mainly be found in caves and on portable objects rather than on bedrocks and in open spaces, we do not deal with them in our study.

Generally speaking, the special syntax of bedrock art in the Soungoun shelter is probably a combination

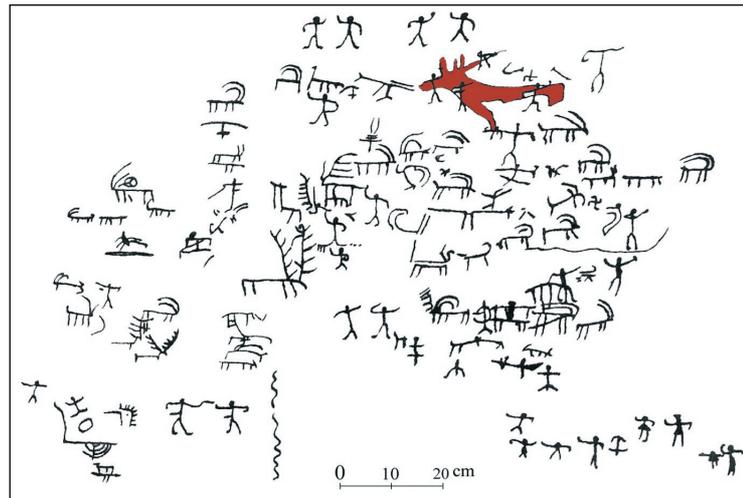


Fig. 7. The Soungoun shelter, general view on carvings.

of mythographs of known animals (ibex, gazelle, serpent, deer) and a small number of signs related to the ideograms that are mostly images of crosses, circles etc (Rafifar 2005).

In order to understand the concepts hidden in these drawings, a vast knowledge of signs that can change through time and space is needed. Therefore, to understand the mythographs, one should be familiar with the mythological and conceptual backgrounds of the land where the artist lived. In this way, we might discover the root concept of these symbolic signs (mythographs) as well as the inhabitants' layers of mind in a specific time and place and, consequently, discover part of the culture of the members of such a society.

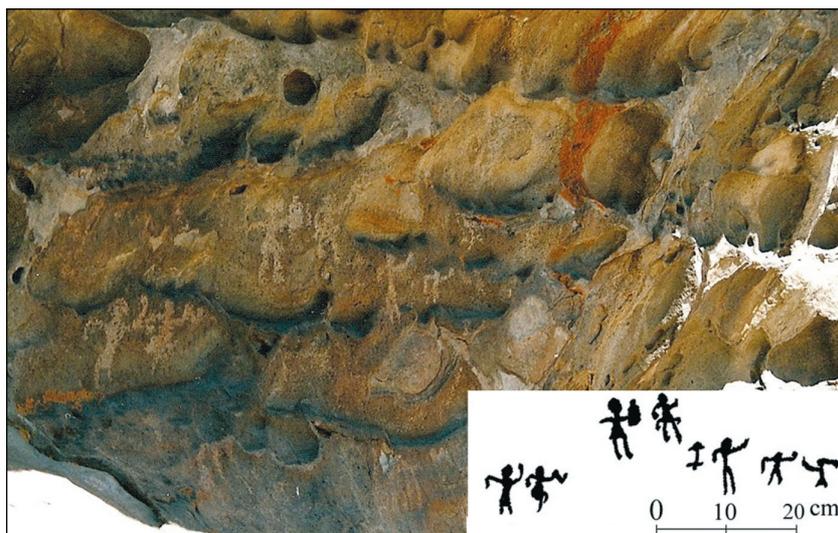
### The five main categories of art

Emanuel Anati classifies primitive art into five general categories based on style, concept and social structure:

- ❶ primitive hunters;
- ❷ primitive gatherers;
- ❸ later hunters;
- ❹ pastoralists and herdsmen;
- ❺ the complex economy (Anati 1998).

The art of the region under study falls mostly within the fifth category, because most of the drawings are mythographs containing signs and animals.

It should be noted that the pictorial language of primitive societies is universal. In other words, not only do the styles and the order governing the manner of presentation and selection of images in different re-



**Fig. 8. The third part of the Soungoun assemblage (with dancing figures).**

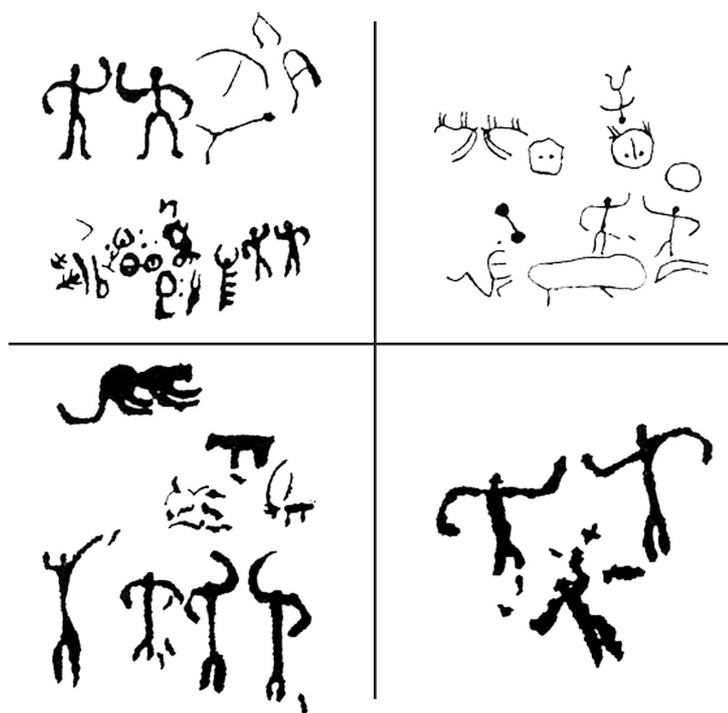
regions of the world observe a specific set of approximately similar regulations, but also this language is a composition of regulated symbolic signs that can show a fairly similar way of thinking. Probably for the same reason, despite the huge time and space gaps between these societies, which make impossible any interaction between them, we may witness astonishing and wonderful similarities in their art: for instance, the image of the 'human palm' in an overwhelming majority of primitive societies all around the world. But no evidence exists to prove that this sign shows a connection between all these societies and has been transferred from one society to another and originates from a certain time and place. It should be remembered that the latter symbolic images appeared around 40 thousand years ago in European Palaeolithic art and have continued to the present time over almost all the globe. This sign has been identified at two sites in Iran: the region of Bastak in Hormozgan Province (*Rafifar 2005.109*), and the Tanbour Mountains of Sirjan in Kerman Province (*Farhadi 1998*). On the other hand, apart from several instances (in Australia), bedrock art is universally mythological and its creators do not live among us any more. Hence, it may not be impossible, but far too difficult to retrieve the minds and beliefs of its creators. The very few survivors having such beliefs and thoughts can be traced to tribes that have

lived in recent centuries in some regions of Australia, the United States of America, Africa and perhaps in some regions in Asia and enjoyed such an art. In fact, it should be admitted that we can hardly achieve the real concepts hidden in such assemblages, and even its comparison with later societies cannot lead to reliable conclusions. Moreover, there exists no guarantee that a society which existed in a specific region one hundred years ago had the very same beliefs and thoughts as its ancestors who

lived several thousand years earlier and created the bedrock art. But as discussed previously, we should not disregard the common aspects of humanity's patterns of thought.

According to Francfort, two approaches to the petroglyphs (Indo-European or shamanistic) can be considered:

- ❶ The first approach uses the ancient Indian Vedas and Old Iranian Avesta as the main sources. In short,



**Fig. 9. The twins's figures of Gerama (Armenia)(after Mardirosian 1981).**

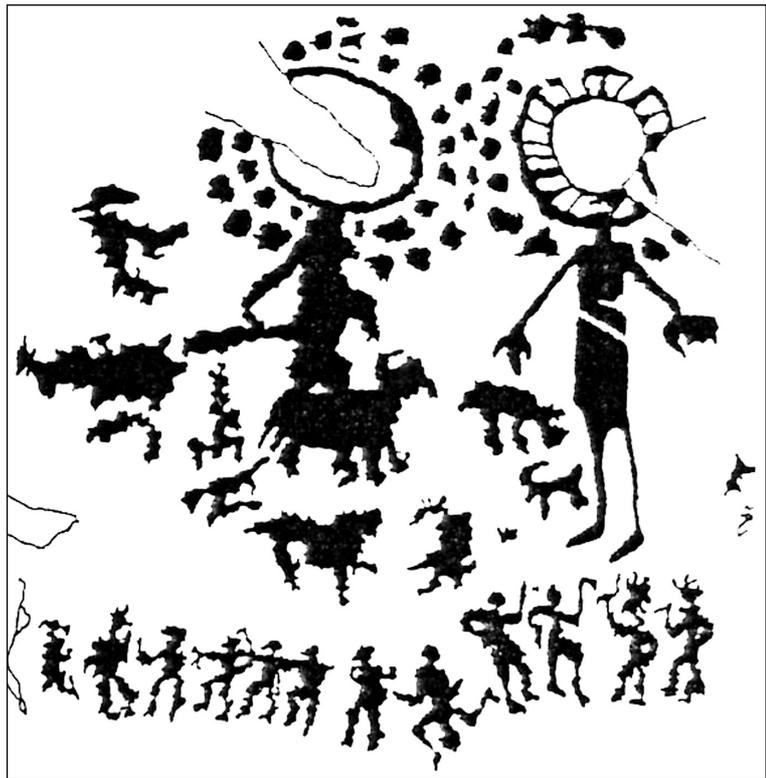
*“the Chalcolithic and Bronze Age petroglyphs were made by Indo-Aryan tribes moving to the south, especially towards India, while the Iron Age rock images are traces of Iranized Saka tribes related to the Scythians peopling the steppe zone from Europe to Mongolia.” (Francfort 2000.305).* Within the corpus of rock images, supporters of the Indo-Iranian theory select the images of horse, cattle, deer, chariot, and various anthropomorphic figures: those with weapons, with radiating ‘solar’ heads and so forth.

☉ The second shamanistic approach relies upon abundant ethnographic data from Siberia, Mongolia and even Kazakhstan.

#### ‘The relationship of rock carving art to shamanism’

Shamanism was first distributed among the inhabitants of Siberian, and it exists today in many different peoples all around the world. In this ritual, shamans claim that they are able to communicate with some powers in this world or other parallel worlds and, accordingly, they can trace those events that affect our world (Dortier 1998).

Another feature of this ritual is communication with the world beyond directly through conjuration. Spirits are usually in the form of animals that assist the shaman. From the other side, he/she can send his/her spirit to the other worlds in order to meet other spirits and be helped by them. This journey is done through a set of ‘magical practices’ administered by the shaman through which he/she goes into ecstasy. The French archaeologist Jean Clottes, and David Lewis Williams (1996), the South African anthropologist, published a book entitled ‘The Prehistoric Shamans’ that caused an uproar. The book discusses the similarities between the rock paintings of the San, a hunter-gatherer community living in South Africa, with drawings carved in caves located in Europe. The themes of images in Europe are the same as the African ones: dotted lines, lines, geometrical drawings, and images of large mammals and [imaginary] creatures composed of two types: demi-human-demi-animal. According to Lewis Williams, these images are produced by the magicians’ minds,



**Fig. 10. Tamgoly IV (Kazakestan): figures with solar-heads and dancing figures.**

made susceptible to illusions by taking ‘hallucinogenic’ drugs, and pass several phases. Perhaps those who drew these images might also have been shamans who created images originating in delusions of communication with spirits. The anthropological findings prove remarkable similarities in these illusionists’ way of thinking and workout. Perhaps the main reason for such similarities is the mental infrastructures and homogenous fundamental beliefs.

Shamanic practices traditionally have a close relationship with hunting. The purpose was to capture the animals’ spirits and make hunting easier. Therefore, shamanism should be regarded as a supernatural approach toward a world in which animals possess spirit. It seems that as primitive societies moved forward to animal husbandry and agriculture, the shamanic function directed to the human spirits more than this. However, Professor M. Lorblanchet, an expert on prehistoric art in France, after a series of field trips among Australian aboriginals, came to the conclusion that: *“The carved caves were undoubtedly ‘temples’ in which sacred ceremonies and rituals were held. Therefore, several ceremonies have always being administered in the temples, just like in churches and cathedrals” (Lorblanchet 2002).* In his opinion, these ceremonies (rites of passage, ceremonies relevant to the dead, collec-

tive and or individual prayer etc.) can be attributed to the drawings carved in such temples.

Iranian anthropologists have found some footprints of shamanic rituals in their studies. They have been identified in a number of regions in Iran, and some places in Azerbaijan, as well as Turkmen Sahara<sup>1</sup>. Among the Turkmen tribes, there are some people referred to as 'porkhān', meaning shaman, and they claim that they communicate with spirits, and through this connection are able to cure patients and perform extraordinary actions.

At the time of writing, one of the most famous shamans (porkhan) of the region lives in Yal Chishmeh village in the District of Kalaleh in the suburbs of Minou Dasht. He visits clients every day or most days of the week, and tries to solve their problems through communication with spirits and their powers (*Ali-mardanian 2006*).

There are similar rituals in the regions of Azerbaijan that are conducted by special people called Amchi. The conductors of such rituals in this region are usually women. The Amchis perform only those actions that are suitable for healing of some diseases. Usually, Amchis cure phobic illnesses through 'magic' methods. Although they are not aware of psychotherapy, they do their job somehow in the same way, in that it is based on belief. One of their tools is the wolf's paw (*Sepehrfar 1992*).

It should be noted that the wolf's paw has been considered a symbol of power in this region and its use in this ceremony is rooted in the inhabitants' beliefs. According to a myth, this animal is found as a symbol of merciless power that is able to destroy everything. If a human being touches it, whatever frightens him/her will be frustrated, as a result of the power that is granted to his/her body and even soul.

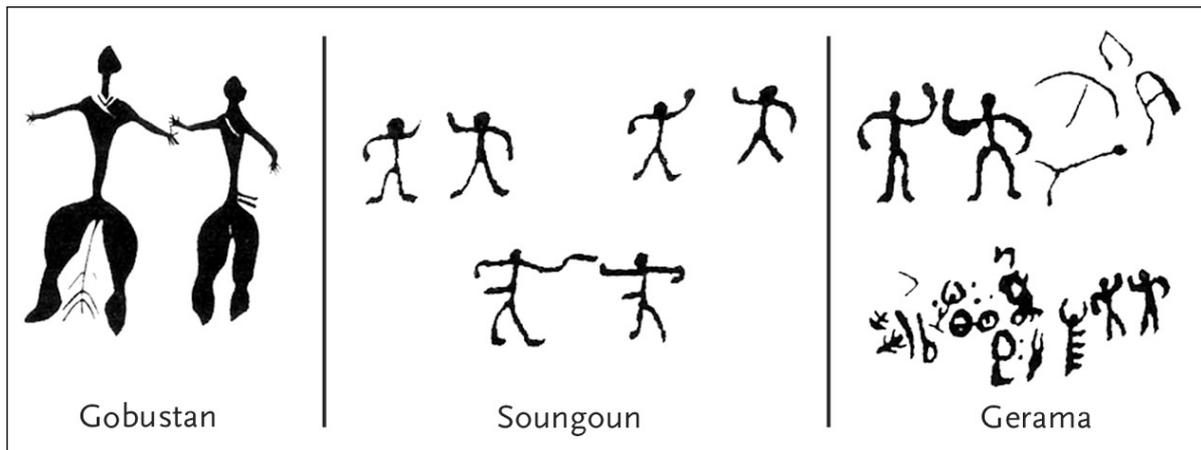
*"Deer are also interpreted as a marker of shamanism especially as far as the perspective of the Scythians is concerned. In this case, a dose of shamanistic influence is admitted."* (*Martynov 1991:52-73*)

*"Cervid representations (deer, moose) and in general all horned herbivore images can be seen frequently in the frame of shamanism, either as riding animals or in the context of hunting."* (*Devlet 1990:110-112*).

There is no doubt that deep caves have not been used for dwelling for more than 20 thousand years. It was universally believed that the Underworld means the Other World and belongs to the spirits and the dead. For the same reason, going into the depths of caves could not be considered as a simple exploratory action. As prehistoric people believed that such spaces are the territory of spirits' and the dead's, they expected to meet spirits there. According to Jean Clottes (*1998*), as prehistoric people went into the dark caves and they used torches to illuminate the caves, they saw images through the reflection of torchlight, and they fancied that these caves were places where spirits come and go. They assumed that the natural openings and cracks in the caves were points from which the animal spirits entered the caves. It could be for the same reason that most of the animal drawings were carved on these walls. In addition, many speleologists have remarked on the hallucinogenic effects of caves in their accounts. Cold, humidity, darkness and the sounds in the caves intensify hallucinations. A majority of experts corroborate the imaginary images attributed to spirits through the drawings carved on the walls of the caves. Accordingly, it is possible that many prehistoric artworks were created in a shamanic framework.

The very same possibility exists for works created in open air spaces. According to Clottes, many works created in America, Africa and other places are undisputedly rooted in shamanic practices. The caves and rock shelters are mostly seen as two-way roads that connect the Real World with the Other World. The spirits can appear in such roads, and a person may reach the Other World through these roads and meet the spirits. Whoever wishes to go toward these carved walls. According to shamanic beliefs, in order to go from this [Real] World to another parallel world, we should pass through tunnels that are protected by these animal phenomena (*Clottes 1998*). In California, bear and rattlesnake (*Whitley 2000*), and in Arasbaran, ibex, deer and serpent might protect them. From the other side, as we have seen, the drawings carved on the walls of Sounoun shelter do not represent any sign of animal husbandry and even no sign of hunting. These drawings belong to animals that had not been domesticated (ibex, deer, serpent, gazelle) and at the moment, there might be no reason in this regard, but these drawings do not undoubtedly belong to a society whose economy is on hunting and gathering.

<sup>1</sup> Turkmen Sahara is a region in the province of Khorassan in northeast Iran. The Turkmen are of Mongolian descent. Apparently, they came to Iran in the 12<sup>th</sup> century AC.



**Fig. 11. The motives (twins) of Gobustan, Soungoun and Gerama.**

Another significant issue is that the manner of presentation of drawings under study is governed by specific rules that do not match with a large number of rock carvings found in other parts of Iran. The Soungoun shelter has all the necessary elements, facilities and attractions for the administration of shamanic practices. Indisputably, illustrations share the logical arrangements for the scene of a performance and is one of the significant indicator of this assemblage. The illustrator conveys concepts organized into categories, to the audience, through the manner of presentation in the scene, where there is sufficient space for gatherings. The messages can also be conveyed to the audience in a more unambiguous way when the shaman employs and arranges these drawings. Moreover, the veiled concepts in each image can direct the ceremony to assumed goals through the creation of a theatrical atmosphere. The same thing can also be seen in the narrating of *Shahnameh* with the help of pictures (*Shāhnāmeḥ-khāni*)<sup>2</sup> that may have no shared goals with shamanic practices, but from the viewpoint of performance elements are somehow identical. It should be noted that the mythological approach to these practices are of paramount importance. The elements of such an approach can be easily be seen in these assemblages in the form of animal images, or as André Leroi-Gourhan calls them, 'mythographs' (*Leroi-Gourhan 1987*).

As has been seen, one of the marker of this assemblage is that there exists no connection between the drawings with the method of production, lifestyle and even ordinary daily activities. Therefore, those tribes who created these drawings had no intention

of depicting the material world and its relevant issues. They are completely symbolic and have been presented in a very precise convention. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the drawings of the Soungoun shelter, especially those carved in the principal shelter, have structural similarities with Caucasian rock carvings (for example Geghama and Gobustan). In the end, there are large numbers of documents and historical records indicating that the first inhabitants of Turkmen Sahara and Arasbaran herdsmen were immigrants who came to Iranian territory from the outer side of the northern borders, and at the outset they settled down in two regions (in Turkmen Sahara and then several parts of Iranian Azerbaijan). In addition, some cultural elements verify such a theory, of which language and style of settlement (pergola) are the most significant indicators. The linguistic factor can be easily confirmed in Turkmen Sahara and there are many linguistic similarities between Turkmen language and that of the tribes in Iranian Azerbaijan. Consequently, one can conclude that shamanic practices came to Iran in distant times. Affirmatively, similar elements can be seen in Gobustan and Geghama, as well as Tamgaly. At least, these similarities prove that the inhabitants of such a large area shared some radical cultural elements, and most probably they established a complete cultural territory. Anyway, the relationship between shamanism with Arasbaran rock carvings cannot absolutely be rejected, because at the moment it not only exists in the region among Caucasian and Mongolian immigrants as described earlier, but also some footprints of shamanism can be identified in a way in the drawings and composition of themes of

<sup>2</sup> *Shahnameh* is the greatest Iranian collection of epic poems from the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. by epic writer Abolghasem Ferdowsi. Some of the scenes of *Shahnameh* are preformed by a storyteller. He utilizes pictures or paintings on fabric or paper in large sizes to show the event in question.

the above-mentioned assemblages. It has been verified that some drawings in the Gobustan assemblage belong to shamans (following picture) and they are absolutely similar to drawings identified in Geghama and Soungoun. Here a question is raised as to whether the Twins with dagger-like outgrowths from their waists cannot be assumed to be a symbol of spirits,

just like animal drawings, e.g. deer, that is a symbol for the 'protection of the family and spirit'. The very spirits that the shamans refer to? There exists a big probability in this respect, because such a conventional drawing has also been found in the Gobustan assemblage (Fig. 11) which has been attributed to a spirit or soul.

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