

New Findings of Rock Art in the Northeast of the Iranian Plateau, Khoshab Plain: Preliminary Report

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Abstract: Studying and investigating rock art has always played an important role in our better understanding of prehistoric and historical societies. In the meantime, the importance of these studies in the Iranian plateau as one of the key regions of Southwest Asia has been neglected. The leading research has been conducted in Khoshab plain, one of the northeastern plains of the Iranian plateau. And in two places on the plain, it has led to the identification of a set of rock motifs containing animal, human, symbolic and geometric motifs.

Keywords: Rock Art, Khoshab Plain, Northeast of Iran, Motifs.

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Introduction

Khoshab plain, as one of the inter-mountain plains in the northeast of the Iranian plateau, leads to Sabzevar-Neishabour from the east and ends to Jovin-Joghatay plain from the west and is considered one of the main corridors connecting the northeastern parts of the Iranian plateau to the central plateau. In the meantime, while extensive research has been conducted on the evidence of rock art in different parts of the east of the Iranian plateau (Rezaei et al., 2016; Sigari et al., 2017; Saffaran, Mozhdekanloo, 2014; Sarhadi et al., 2013; Ghorbani & Sadeghi, 2018) as well as Atrak valley and the Mashhad plain (see for example: Vahdati, 2012; Vahdati, 2021a,b), this part of northeastern Iran has been overlooked.

The authors' investigations on Khoshab plain were conducted in 2022 in order to identify evidence of rock art. It is a region that environmentally faces a lack of permanent river water resources and its main economy is based on pastoral livestock in the margins of limited springs located in its southern

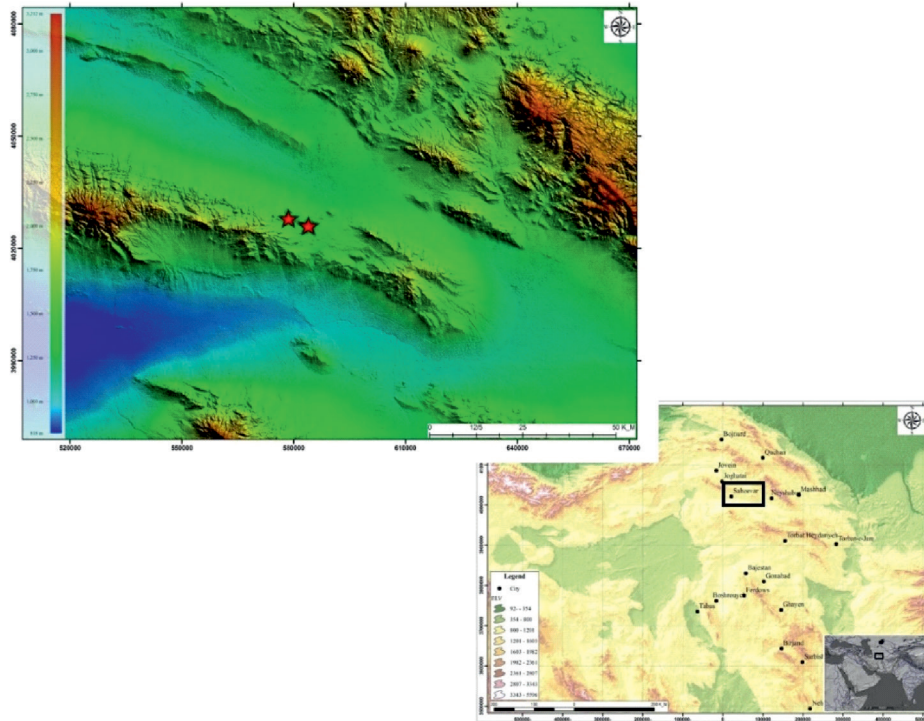


Fig 1: Location of BolghanAbad and Seyed Abadrock Art in the Northeast of the Iranian Plateau

foothills. The authors' research led to the identification of two Petroglyph assemblages. The mentioned collections are located in two points, Bolghan Abad and Seyed Abad. The Seyed Abad set was recorded at an altitude of 100 meters above the plain level and on the northern slopes of the Dagh Mountains at two points which are 200 meters apart. The first panel has been created on a piece of basalt stone block with dimensions of 8x6 meters and is situated on the lower slope of Seyed Abadspring and a total of 8 reliefs have been engraved on it in a stroking manner (Fig. 2). The motifs used in this panel

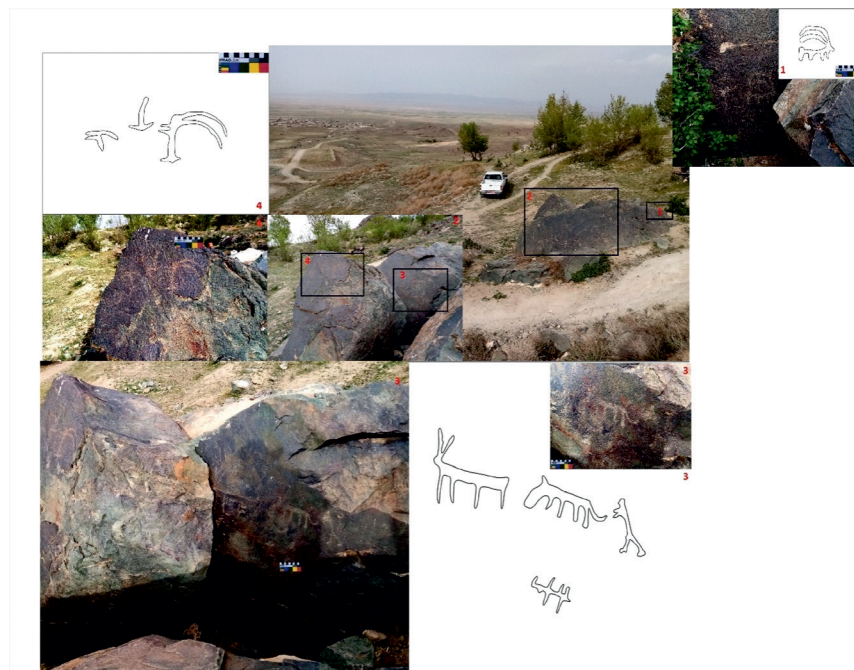


Fig. 2: The First Panel of the Seyed Abadpetrography site

are animal motifs, which mainly include goat motifs as well as a picture of a carnivorous animal and a human being.

The second panel with a distance of 200 meters and in the southeast of the previous panel was identified on a rock block with dimensions of 3x5 meters in an engraved manner, which is completely different from the other motifs obtained in our studies, both in terms of technique and type of motifs; and they are mainly in the form of symbolic motifs and sometimes plant sterilized motifs (Fig. 3). However, some of them are closely related to the motifs identified in Balander.

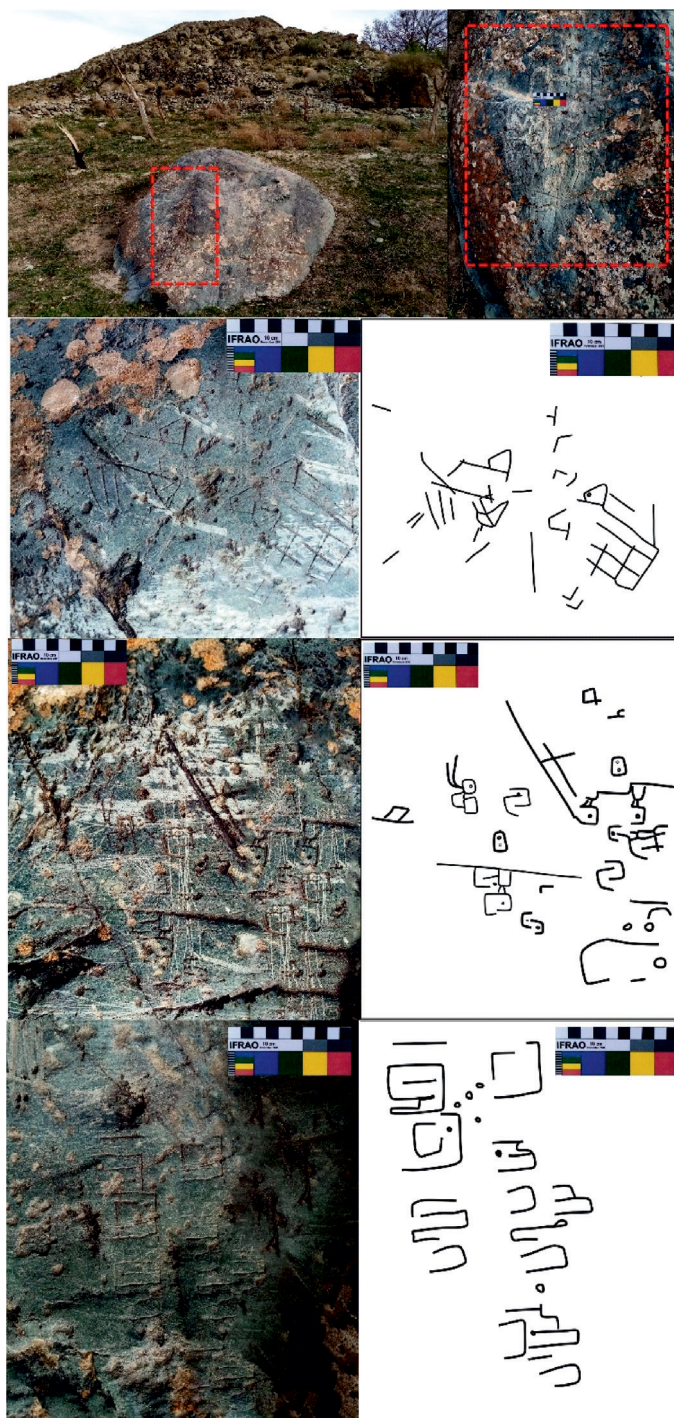


Fig 3: The Second Panel of the Seyed Abad petrography Site

Bolghan Abad assemblage was identified 5 km east of Seyed Abad motifs and along a valley of the same name, which can be seen in two separate panels on a distinct rock but adjacent to each other (5 meters apart). In terms of performance, the motifs have been created in two stroking and carving manners and mainly include goat-antelope motifs. Moreover, Persian letters such as the words Shah, Ali, etc. can also be seen in the middle of pane 1. Human motifs in the form of riders as well as symbolic motifs including broken cross motifs can also be observed in the collection.

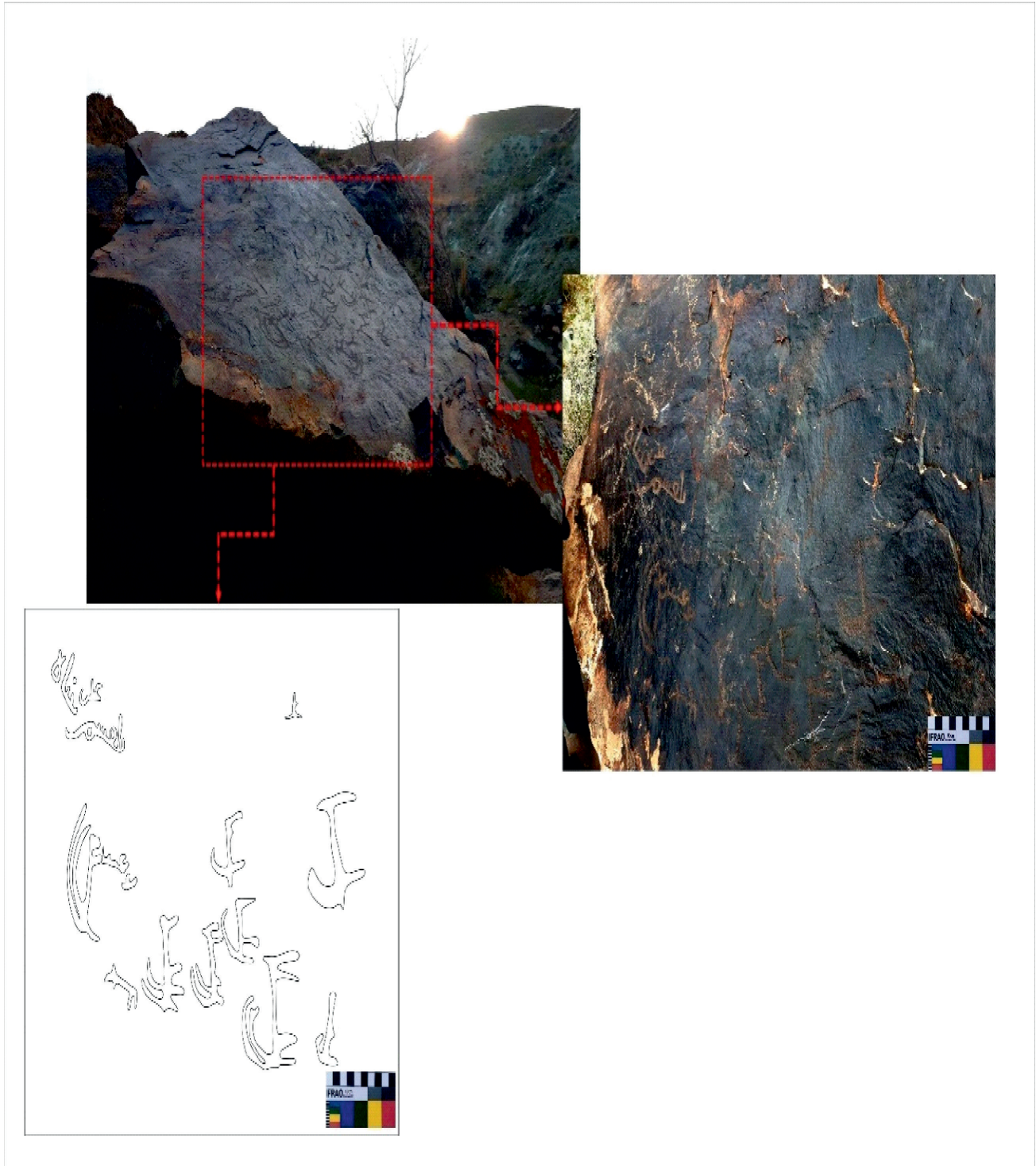


Fig. 4. The First Panel of Bolghanabad Petrography Site

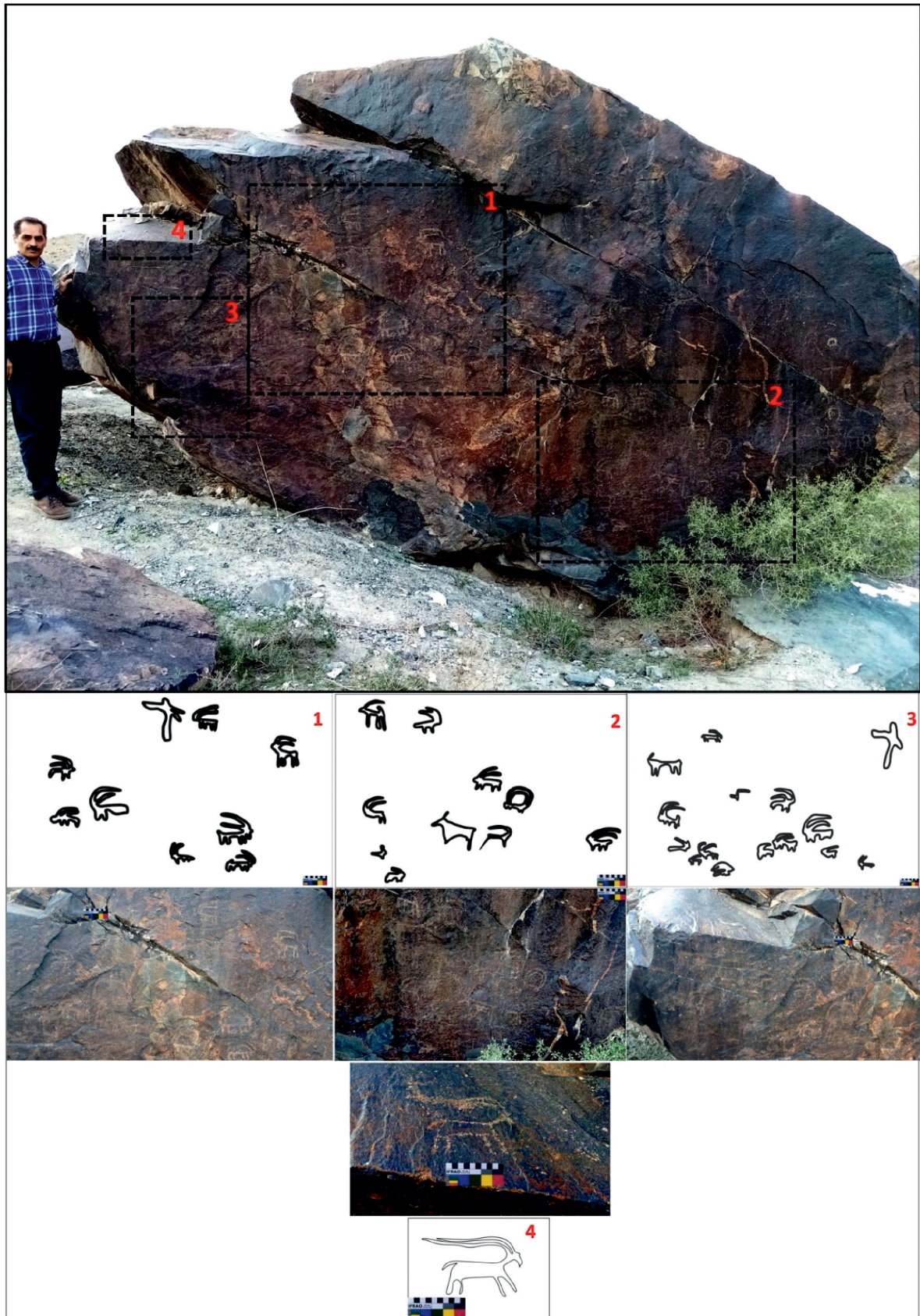


Fig 6: The Third Panel of Hossein Abad Petrography Site

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