



# Investigation and Research on Kangjiashimenzi Rock Art in Hutubi County of Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

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**Abstract:** The Kangjiashimenzi rock art in Hutubi County is a tangible cultural heritage of the primitive ancestors in this region. Based on extensive field investigations, the author has studied the images of “human figures”, “animals”, “cupules”, and “broken line patterns” in the Kangjiashimenzi rock art. The different creation methods and chronological relationships of these images indicate a long-standing tradition of rock art creation in this region, possibly lasting for thousands of years. The themes of rock art varied across different eras, and the cultures represented by these images reflect the convergence of diverse cultures in this region and the mutual influences of these cultures throughout history.

**Palabras clave:** Xinjiang rock art; Kangjiashimenzi rock art; Human images; painted rock art.

**Resumen:** Las quilcas de Kangjiashimenzi, en el condado de Hutubi, son un patrimonio cultural tangible de los ancestros de esta región. Basándose en extensas investigaciones de campo, el autor estudia las imágenes con representaciones de figuras humanas, animales, cúpulas y patrones de líneas discontinuas halladas en la gráfica rupestre de esta región. Los diferentes métodos de producción y las relaciones cronológicas de estas imágenes indican una larga tradición de creación artística; posiblemente de miles de años de duración. Los temas expresados en las quilcas variaron a lo largo de diferentes épocas, y las culturas representadas por estas imágenes reflejan la convergencia de diversas sociedades en esta región; con influencias mutuas a lo largo de la historia.

**Key words:** Quilcas de Xinjiang; Quilcas de Kangjiashimenzi; Imágenes humanas; Pinturas rupestres.

Rock art is a global phenomenon, found in the different cultures around the world. The creation of rock art spans the entire history of humanity. Rock art can be used to understand symbolism, religious systems, gender relations, cultural boundaries, cultural evolution, the origins of art, and beliefs. As early human expressions of worldview and self, rock art depicting hunting and food gathering reflects the lifestyle of the time; images depicting weapons, tools, and other artifacts represent the technological capabilities of the people; and images depicting myths and beliefs are rooted in the spiritual world and understanding of human, natural, and supernatural relationships of the time. Researching rock art significantly impacts our understanding of human history and specific cultural groups. Therefore, “reading” rock art is a gateway to exploring various aspects of prehistoric culture, carrying the early history and memories of humanity. Xinjiang has historically been a vital corridor for cultural exchange, displaying a confluence of diverse cultures. The rock art of Xinjiang are material remnants of the spiritual life of the early ancestors who lived there. Investigating the rock art in Xinjiang can reveal the origins of the oldest civilizations on this land, as well as insights into the social structure, religious beliefs, lifestyle, and cultural exchanges of the early inhabitants.

## I. The discovery and distribution of rock art in Xinjiang

The records of rock art in Xinjiang can be traced back to the Qing Dynasty, when Ji Yun (纪昀) mentioned them in his *Jottings from the Thatched Abode of Close Observations, Volume 13, Huaixi Miscellaneous Chronicles III* (《阅微草堂笔记·卷十三槐西杂志三》): “In the caves of Kashgar, there are images of centaurs on the stone walls. According to the Hui people, these are paintings from the Han Dynasty. They are well preserved, so they can still

be discerned after many years. Han paintings, like those in the Wuliang Shrine, are usually seen in copies, but the original works are as old as these. Later, soldiers lit fires to keep warm, and the smoke obscured the images, making them all blurry. It is a pity that when the army first arrived, no artist was there to make a copy.” From this passage, we can see that scholars of the time had not only noticed the rock art but also compared them to Han Dynasty brick paintings. In 1928, during the Sino-Swedish Northwest Scientific Expedition, the Chinese team leader Xu Xusheng (徐旭生) investigated the rock art on Bogda Peak in the Tianshan Mountains and recorded: “There are deer, sheep, and people holding bows and arrows; the rest are not very recognizable.” Expedition member and Swedish archaeologist Folke Bergman noted in his *Archaeological Exploration Notes: 1928 Xinjiang Journey* (《考古探险笔记：1928年新疆之旅》) that he discovered rock art in the Buyantubulak Valley, 65 kilometers south of Xingdi on his way to Lop Nur: “On the limestone walls are rough images of animals, riders, and some incomprehensible symbols. Even on large rocks in the small river, there are carvings. The rock art is ‘layered’ in this way: the oldest are at the top, the newest at the bottom. The newest type contains Buddhist symbols and the marks of the Torghut people, hence quite modern; while the oldest ones are clearly prehistoric. I made rubbings of them in white... The murals are 5.5 meters above the ground.” It is evident that Bergman not only recorded the images depicted in the rock art but also noticed the stratification and superimposition of the images.

After the 1950s, historians and archaeologists in Xinjiang focused on investigating rock art in regions such as Hami, Turpan, Changji, Ili, and Altay, conducting extensive research and making valuable attempts. Cultural relics and archaeology professionals, represented by Wang Binghua (王炳华), Wang Mingzhe (王明哲), and Wang Bo (王博), have written a series of articles introducing



and studying the rock art of Xinjiang. From 2007 to 2009, during the third national cultural relics survey in Xinjiang, a total of 472 rock art sites were surveyed, with 249 new sites discovered. Among these, 18 were designated as provincial-level cultural relic protection sites, and 89 were designated as county-level cultural relic protection sites. The newly discovered rock art is mainly concentrated in the Altai Mountains and the Tianshan Mountains, with a few also found in the Kunlun Mountains. The concentration of rock art in these mountainous areas is closely related to Xinjiang's geographic environment of "three mountains and two basins."

In the Altai Mountains, numerous winter and summer pastures have been scattered since ancient times. These pastures stretch from the Altay region to the Tacheng region, then to Mulei County in Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture, and Barkol County and Yiwu County in the Hami region. Although they are not continuously distributed, they are all important rock art sites in Xinjiang. The rock art distributed in these areas have both similarities and differences. All the cave rock art currently discovered in Xinjiang is concentrated in the Altai Mountains. They often feature handprints and abstract human figures composed of simple lines. The carved rock art frequently depicts images of ibex, carts, horses, and other patterns<sup>1</sup>.

Among the mountains of the Tianshan Mountain, many rivers have developed, including the famous Tekes River, Kunes River, Kash River, and Ili River. Additionally, there are more than 6,890 glaciers of various sizes, which serve as natural solid reservoirs. The melting snow and ice form over two hundred rivers that nourish and irrigate the vast oases to the north and south of the Tianshan Mountains. Between the towering mountains, there are basins and valleys, including the famous Hami Basin, Turpan Basin, and Ili Valley. These areas have fertile soil and lush vegetation, forming excellent natural mountain pastures. The rock art of the Tianshan Mountains is primarily distributed near these pastures and extend north to connect with the rock art groups of the Altai Mountains, and southwards to the vicinity of the Kunlun Mountains. However, the southern part of the Tianshan Mountains has far less rock art compared to the northern part, and the stylistic features also exhibit some noticeable differences from those in the north. The style of the rock art in the south is more consistent with those of the Kunlun Mountains<sup>2</sup>.

The distribution pattern of rock art in Xinjiang seems to change across the Tianshan Mountains. On the northern slopes of the Tianshan Mountains and the majority of the intermontane pastures and grazing lands extending north to the southern slopes of the Altai Mountains, there is a rich variety of rock art. The rock art in the Altai Mountains is most concentrated in the Altay and Tacheng regions. The northern slopes of the Tianshan Mountains have typical rock art in the Hami region, Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Bortala Mongol Autonomous Prefecture, and Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture. The southern slopes of the Tianshan Mountains are characterized by rock art in Bayingolin Mongol Autonomous Prefecture<sup>3</sup>. Most rock

art in Xinjiang is carved on wind-protected, sun-facing rock slopes near pastures and water sources (regardless of whether they are currently dry). The Altai and Tianshan Mountains contain many intermontane basins, some of which are relatively vast and flat grasslands. On the slopes surrounding these grasslands, there is often much rock art. The distribution areas of ancient rock art are generally consistent with the areas of today's pastures<sup>4</sup>.

This study takes the Kangjiashimenzi rock art in Hutubi County, located on the middle section of the northern slope of the Tianshan Mountains and the southern edge of the Junggar Basin, as an example to explore the exchange and convergence of early civilizations behind this rock art site through image style analysis. This area was a crucial passage of the ancient "Silk Road" to Central Asia and European countries; it remains an important transportation hub leading to various places in northern Xinjiang and border trade ports such as Khorgos and Alashankou. The Tianshan area, where the Kangjiashimenzi rock art is located, serves as a link between nomadic and agrarian societies and is a crossroads of the Eurasian steppe. The convenient transportation, abundant resources, and pleasant climate have nurtured the populations along the Tianshan foothills, forming a long history and numerous valuable cultural relics. This has also shaped the diverse and multifaceted image style of the Kangjiashimenzi rock art.

## II. Geographical environment of Kangjiashimenzi rock art in Xinjiang

Kangjiashimenzi rock art is located in Hutubi County of Hui Autonomous Prefecture of Changji in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, which is the mid-range of Tianshan Mountains 75 kilometers away from the southwest of the county. Its geographical coordinates are as follows: northern latitude 43° 51' 2"; east longitude 89° 19' 20"; altitude 1,500 meters (Fig. 1). It is one of the most representative rock art sites in China. Hutubi County's terrain is higher in the south and lower in the north, sloping from southeast to northwest. The landscape is divided into mountainous areas, plains, and deserts. The southern Tianshan mountain area is characterized by rugged terrain, deep ravines, lush forests, and abundant water and grass, making it a natural pasture. The central part is an alluvial plain, consisting of alluvial fans, overflow belts, and alluvial plain landforms, and is the main crop-growing area of Hutubi County. Such a natural environment, suitable for both agriculture and animal husbandry, has nurtured the populations living here and given rise to the Kangjiashimenzi rock art.

The Kangjiashimenzi rock art has survived thousands of years of wind and rain erosion, remaining relatively clear and not fading into oblivion, which is remarkable. The site became a protected cultural relic of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region in 1990 and a national cultural relic protection site in 2013. It has been developed into a comprehensive scenic area for protection, research, tourism, and promotion, with protective fencing around the images. The Kangjiashimenzi rock art is located high above the ground, making them less susceptible to human damage. Water channels have been constructed on both sides of the cliff to direct rainwater and melted snow

<sup>1</sup> Yu Jianjun (于建军): Preliminary Study on Xinjiang Petroglyphs (《新疆岩画初步研究》), *The Archaeology of Northern Ethnicity* (《北方民族考古》), Volume 2, 2015, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> Ob Cit, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> Ob Cit.

<sup>4</sup> Ob Cit.



to the ground, preventing water damage to the images and colors. Currently, the primary cause of weathering of the Kangjiashimenzi rock art is wind erosion due to strong winds and sand in the Xinjiang region, as well as the tension changes in the rock caused by diurnal and seasonal temperature variations, which can lead to cracks or flaking of the rock surface.

According to the author's field investigation, the name "Kangjiashimenzi" originated during the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China period when a family with the surname Kang lived in the area. The locals referred to one member of the family as "Kang Lao Er" (康老二), and because the shape of the mountains resembled two doors, the area was named "Kangjiashimenzi" and has retained this name ever since. The Kangjiashimenzi rock art is the most typical and influential rock art in Hutubi County ("Hutubi" means "auspicious" in the local language). In some domestic and international literature, they are also referred to as the "Hutubi rock art." In fact,

there are several other rock art sites in Hutubi County featuring depictions of human figures, animals, and more. Kangjiashimenzi rock art is located on the vertical rock surface at the bottom of south palisades of Cheltenham Badland in Late Jurassic on the northwest bank of the junction of two mountain streams. The Kangla'er Valley (康拉尔沟) and Laobawanzi Valley (涝坝湾子沟) flow respectively to the east and south of the site. This region has the typical rock stratum of Late Jurassic in Tianshan Mountains, scientifically named the "Kalazha Formation" (commonly known as the "city wall conglomerate"), formed about 70 million years ago, consisting mainly of horizontally deposited sandy conglomerate. The rock art image is located in the concave rock at the bottom of the soaring columnar weathered rocky mountain. Due to the rock face being sunlit and exposed to the wind, it is also known as "sunlit rock." From a distance, the mountain where the rock art is located resembles a castle amidst the continuous mountain ranges (Fig. 2). The concave



**Figura 1.** Geographical location of Kangjiashimenzi rock art.



**Figura 2.** Geomorphologic landscape of Kangjiashimenzi rock art



rock shelter not only provides protection from wind and rain but also has significant acoustic properties. Standing on the large stone within the rock shelter and shouting, the sound travels far, with echoes resonating throughout the valley. The images at Kangjiashimenzi are primarily about human figures. On the same rock face as the human images rock art, about ten meters to the west and on the stones within the rock shelter, there are multiple groups of animal images, mainly depicting sheep, deer, and horses. Additionally, there are cupules and broken line patterns.

In 2015, rock art scholars Robert G. Bednarik, Paul S. C. Taçon, Maxim, and Tang Huisheng (汤惠生) conducted a survey of the Kangjiashimenzi and Altai rock art. Bednarik estimated that the Kangjiashimenzi rock art dates back to 2,000-3,000 years ago, with the upper age limit not earlier than 4000 years ago and the lower age limit not later than 1,500 years ago.

In the summer of 2017, the author conducted a systematic investigation of the Kangjiashimenzi rock art and the surrounding cultural customs, encompassing images, regional ecological environment, folk customs, and historical culture. This aimed to outline the “time-space” context in which the rock art was created. Additionally, the research was placed within the context of ethnic social relationships for interpretation. By employing multiple forms of evidence such as ethnographic and archaeological data, the experiential scope of rock art research was extended. This interdisciplinary and holistic approach continuously supplemented the evidence chain, making the logical connection between material remains and spiritual interpretation more rigorous and verifiable, thus mitigating the risk of over-interpretation of the rock art.

### III. Investigation and research on the human images of Kangjiashimenzi rock art

The main images of the Kangjiashimenzi rock art depict human figures engaged in a “group dance” (Figs. 3 and 4). The length of these images from east to west is about 13 meters, the distance from the lowest layer of petroglyph to

the ground is about 1.9 meters, and the distance from the upper petroglyph to the ground is nearly 10 meters. The petroglyph is dominated by human images, and pictures of “two-horse” and “tigers” are between human images. The human images have different sizes: the largest one is bigger than a real person, while the smallest one is about 10cm. There are 74 big images and 62 small images. The gender of some images can be recognized according to the feature. Men are strong, and their genital organs and testicles are drawn while women are slim, beautiful and busty. The copulation action also appears in the image, but some images are abstract or mottled, and their genders cannot be recognized. In addition, there are double-headed figure image (an image of two heads sharing a V-shaped body with male genital organ on one side of the body) and image of a figure with a baby in the abdomen (there is an image similar to human head in the abdomen of the figure). This expression method is not unique to the rock art and is commonly found in animal rock art, such as the rock paintings of a calf inside a cow’s abdomen in the Tambun rock art of Malaysia.

In the human figures of the Kangjiashimenzi rock art, the feature of the “pointed hat” is particularly prominent. Wang Binghua (王炳华) considered this as evidence of the Saka people’s presence. The “pointed hat” is a common cultural symbol in the Western Regions and is still made and worn today. Historically, three such hats were unearthed at the Subeixi site in Shanshan County, Xinjiang. Additionally, the “Golden Man” from the Issyk-Kul site in Kazakhstan also wore “pointed hats”. And hooked pointed hats from the Pazyryk Cemetery in the Gorno-Altai region of Russia were found. Russian scholars believe that the pointed hats found in the Pazyryk Cemetery symbolize the “Tree of Life.” According to the author’s field research, in the current Uyghur culture, the process of making the “pointed hat” involves chanting, viewing it as a symbol of mountains, masculine power, and a representation of sacredness and nobility. The pointed hats on the female mummies from tombs M6 and M11 at the Subeixi site in Shanshan County (Fig. 5) are very distinct, with



Figura 3. The main images of the Kangjiashimenzi rock art.



Figura 4. The main images of the Kangjashimenzi rock art (part)

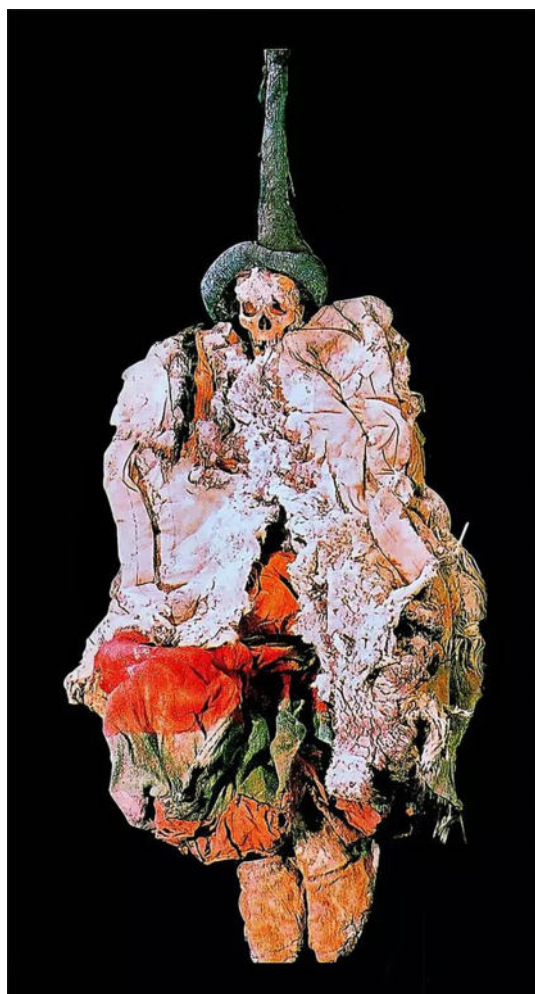


Figura 5. TM6 female mummy (left) and M11 female mummy (right) in Cemetery No.1 of Subeixi Site in Shanshan County



M6's hat having an internal support rod, making the high pointed tip similar to the "antennae" seen on the human images in the Kangjiashimenzi rock art. Mallory and Mair suggested that the Subeixi female mummies might have been priests, royalty, or both<sup>5</sup>. Herodotus, in his descriptions of the armies fighting against Xerxes, noted that the Saka wore pointed hats. Additionally, an image of a Saka king wearing a pointed hat appears in the Bihistun Inscriptions. These hats are clearly depicted in the reliefs of Persepolis, showing envoys wearing these distinctive headpieces, identified as Saka, the Persian name for the nomadic people known as the Scythians by the Greeks. What can be inferred from these peculiar headpieces? The evidence suggests that those wearing towering hats were either mediators between humans and deities or deities themselves. The earliest depictions of figures wearing high hats are of deities, indicating that only deities and possibly those in their vicinity wore such hats. As priests distinguished themselves from other members of society and to bring themselves closer to the divine, they also wore these hats, symbolizing their unique connection with the deities and their elevated status<sup>6</sup>. This suggests that the "pointed hat" design was not primarily functional but was used in early witchcraft or religious practices as a tool for communication between humans and deities, symbolizing divine or royal power. The author believes that the human images with "pointed hats" in the Kangjiashimenzi rock art not only support the presence of the Saka but also indicate that the scenes depicted might represent certain rituals with strong witchcraft or religious (primitive shamanism) undertones. This rock art serves as both a part of the ritual and its visual representation, effectively "recording events and making things happen."

Another typical feature in the human images of the Kangjiashimenzi rock art is the exaggerated expression of male genitalia. It is precisely because of the prominent depiction of this in images that many scholars have adopted the point of view of "recreation worship" in their interpretation. creation and recreation are the main theme in the social life of ancient human beings. However, whether the human figure and genitalia are created in one period or added in the later period and depicted and combined in different time and space still needs more in-depth observation and the assistance of dating techniques. However, the performance of singing and dancing and highlighting genitals in the whole image seems to show the pleasant scene of the ancestors praying for more children, more people and more prosperity, which is also confirmed in the anthropological investigation of the surrounding terrain and myths and legends. In terms of location selection, the concept of "hills as male, valleys as female" serves as further evidence of the recreation worship expressed in the Kangjiashimenzi rock art. In folklore, when choosing a site for a home or considering the location of a village or town, the "female form" is considered the best. This refers to land between two mountains, such as a river valley or a mountain valley, believed to be beneficial for

prosperity and bliss. For burial sites, a concave terrain resembling the female genitalia, commonly referred to as "flower land (鲜花地)", "lotus land (莲花地)", or "golden plate offering fruit (金盘献果)" is preferred. Burying the deceased in such a location is believed to protect the living. Moreover, there are myths related to childbirth and fertility associated with this area. Approximately 100 meters from the rock art, there is a partially collapsed grotto with a spring seeping from a crevice. Local Kazakh herders call this spring the "sacred water (神水)", "tear spring (泪泉)", or "mother and child spring (子母泉)" and believe that drinking its water helps women to conceive. Infertile women often visit this place, bringing offerings to worship and drink the spring water to restore their fertility and bear boys. Whether these myths have been passed down from ancient times or were constructed and embellished by later generations to emphasize the creation worship in the Kangjiashimenzi rock art is unknown.

Since ancient times, the Tianshan Mountains region has been a corridor for East-West cultural exchange, resulting in a diverse mix of cultures, populations, and ethnic groups, with mutual permeation of cultural acculturation and Confucianization. For example, the British scholar E.H. Minns, a renowned researcher of Scythian culture, pointed out the spread of cultural relations between the Scythian culture and the Greek culture in the Black Sea steppes in his book *Scythians and Greeks* (《斯基泰人与希腊人》)<sup>7</sup>. The Kangjiashimenzi rock art is both connected to and distinct from the rock art in Central Asia. Whether the stylistic similarities between the Kangjiashimenzi rock art and that in Kazakhstan's Tanbaly, as well as in Azerbaijan's Absheron and Gobustan regions, are related to cultural communication still requires more precise dating and supporting evidence. However, this possibility cannot be ruled out. For instance, the rock art in Kazakhstan's Tanbaly features a row of hand-holding dancers at the bottom of the image, which is stylistically similar to the hand-holding dancers in the Kangjiashimenzi rock art. The difference lies in the deeper, "U"-shaped incisions of the Kangjiashimenzi rock art, which were carved and partially colored, whereas the Tanbaly rock art is more shallowly engraved. Based on the methods of creation and the depth of the incisions, the images in the Kangjiashimenzi rock art appear to predate those in the Tanbaly rock art (Fig. 6).

The rock art of Gobustan in Azerbaijan (Fig. 7) is geographically situated between the Caucasus Mountains and the Caspian Sea, serving as a gateway to Europe and a primary migration route for peoples from Asia to Europe. In 2007, Gobustan rock art was designated a World Heritage site by UNESCO. Its rich imagery of hunting, animals, plants, and lifestyle (humans) spans from prehistoric times to the Middle Ages. Gobustan boasts over 6,000 petroglyphs, and extensive evidence from caves and rock shelters indicates a 15,000-year history of human habitation or use. Anati, in his study of Gobustan rock art, posited that the earliest rock art in this region could date back 30,000 years. The style of the rock art reflects mutual cultural influences and connections between Europe and the Near East. Through the various periods represented in the rock art, cultural changes

<sup>5</sup> J.P. Mallory, Victor H. Mair. *The Tarim Mummies*. London: Thames & Hudson. 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Karlene Jones-Bley (卡尔莲·琼斯-布雷) and Ding Lanlan (丁兰兰): Tall Hats: Reaching to the Sky (高帽:《直通天国》), *Steppe Cultural Relics* (《草原文物》), 2012, Issue 1, Pages 110-114.

<sup>7</sup> E.H. Minns, *Scythians and Greeks*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913.



Figura 6. Kazakhstan Tanbaly rock art (left), Kangjiashimenzi rock art (center), the nicks in Kangjiashimenzi rock art (right).



Figura 7. Gobustan rock art in Azerbaijan.

and early Homo sapiens migrations can be traced<sup>8</sup>. The depictions of female bodies in Gobustan rock art are characterized by round, triangular shapes and diamond-shaped buttocks, blending the rounded, voluptuous traits of European prehistoric art with the triangular body style seen in the Kangjiashimenzi rock art.

Scattered around the Kangjiashimenzi rock art are numerous cairns and stone circle graves. For example, about 15 kilometers southeast of Queergou Village in Queergou Town, Hutubi County, in a valley of the Tianshan Mountains, lies the Shimenzi cemetery (approximately 25 kilometers northwest of the Kangjiashimenzi rock art). According to data from the third national cultural relics survey, the Shimenzi cemetery contains 94 tombs, mainly distributed on the first and second terraces on the west bank of the Hutubi River, with fewer on the east bank. In terms of oral health, the deceased showed signs of periodontitis but no cavities, possibly due to a diet high in animal-based foods, suggesting that the

ancient residents of Shimenzi were primarily engaged in an animal husbandry economy<sup>9</sup>. The Subeixi culture of the Turpan oasis (basin) southeast of Hutubi, and the Chawuhu culture at the northern edge of the Yanqi oasis to the south, practiced both agriculture and animal husbandry, dating approximately from 1000 BC to the early Common Era. They cultivated and consumed wheat and millet, while also raising sheep and cattle for food and clothing. They utilized the limited water resources of the oasis to engage in primitive, extensive farming techniques, living a settled lifestyle. Residents of the Subeixi site, where the female mummy with a “pointed hat” was found, lived in semi-subterranean houses. The site yielded various woolen garments, felt, leather goods, bows and arrows, and numerous sacrificial sheep, indicating that the local inhabitants were engaged in animal husbandry and hunting, with developed pottery,

<sup>8</sup> Emmanuel Anati. *World Rock Art: The Primordial Language* [M]. Gloscestershire: Archaeopress Archaeology, 1994

<sup>9</sup> Zhang Yuzhong (张玉忠) et al.: Brief Report on the Excavation of the Shimenzi Cemetery in Hutubi, Xinjiang (《新疆呼图壁石门子墓地发掘简报》), *Cultural Relics* (《文物》), 2014, Issue 12, Pages 16-17.



leather, and other handicrafts<sup>10</sup>. The primary cemetery of the Chawuhu culture was a communal burial ground for large primitive clans, with an economy primarily based on animal husbandry (nomadism). The abundant pottery discovered indicates a stable, settled lifestyle, and the presence of grains in some pottery suggests the practice of primitive agriculture. Iron tools appeared in the later tombs. The Subeixi and Chawuhu cultures, with their geographical proximity and similar timelines, as well as their subsistence strategies, customs, beliefs, and social structures, provide valuable insights for interpreting the underlying significance of the Kangjiashimenzi rock art. They can be considered as the spatial context for the creation of the Kangjiashimenzi rock art.

#### IV. Investigation and research on the rock paintings, animals, cupules and broken line patterns in the Kangjiashimenzi rock art

The Kangjiashimenzi rock art features not only rich human images but also images of animals such as deer, horses, and sheep, as well as cupules and broken line patterns (Fig. 8). When investigating and studying the Kangjiashimenzi rock art, it is important to focus not only on the typical “group portrait” but also on other rock paintings and petroglyphs at this site. The various images at the Kangjiashimenzi rock art, created using

different methods and from different periods, indicate a long-standing tradition of rock art creation, possibly spanning thousands of years. The themes of the rock art changed over time, and the cultures represented by these images reflect the convergence of diverse cultures in this region and their mutual influences throughout history.

Since its discovery, the large “group portrait” in the Kangjiashimenzi rock art has continued to attract attention from the outside world. Scholars believe this is a relic of the Saka people from around 3,000 years ago. However, in investigation, the author discovered that there were many rock paintings and petroglyph images on the big rock below the palisades and cliff of Kangjiashimenzi rock art. The painted rock art is on the west side of “group portrait”, about one meter from the ground. Most of them are small images of 7 cm or 8 cm or more than ten centimeters. Besides, they are mottled, and it is hard to differentiate animal images, human images and hunting images. The colors include red, white and faint yellow (the faint yellow visible now may differ significantly from the original color due to weathering). On the rock wall about two meters above the ground to the west of the painted rock art, there are scenes composed of dozens of engraved animal images. Additionally, scattered large stones beneath the rock shelter feature engravings of animals, cupules, broken line patterns, and more. Because these painted and engraved images are not visually prominent, and some of the animal images might be from a later period, previous research has primarily focused on the “group portrait” since the discovery of the Kangjiashimenzi rock art in the 1980s, with insufficient attention given to the other images. From

<sup>10</sup> Chen Ge (陈戈): The Origin and Relationship of Subeixi Culture with Other Cultures (《苏贝希文化的源流及与其它文化的关系》), *The Western Regions Studies* (《西域研究》), 2002, Issue 2, Page 15.



Figura 8. Palisades of rock paintings, animal images, cupules and broken line patterns in Kangjiashimenzi rock art.



the perspective of completeness and comprehensiveness in the investigation and research of rock art sites, all images at a rock art site should be included. This also touches upon basic issues in rock art research, such as the division of rock art sites and panels, and the holistic approach to rock art research methodologies.

In the study of rock art, how to define the scope of rock art is a common issue. This definition can lead to discussions on the relationships and stylistic differences between rock art within different geographical categories. Regarding the classification of rock art areas, sites, panels, and images, the method proposed by Italian rock art scholar Emmanuel Anati is commonly used internationally. He pointed out that a rock art area usually includes multiple rock art sites and is often delineated based on cultural or topographical distinctions (such as valleys, plains, or mountains), with at least a 20-kilometer gap between two rock art areas. A rock art site is typically a concentrated area where rock art images are spaced within 500 meters of each other<sup>11</sup>. Panels are defined differently based on the content and position of the rock art and usually refer to multiple images painted or carved on the same rock or rock face. An image refers to a single specific rock art figure (e.g., a human face, animal, or abstract symbol). In the actual process of classification, factors such as the overlapping of images, the actual natural environment, surrounding archaeological remains, and cultural relevance must also be considered. Specifically, for the Kangjiashimenzi rock art as a rock art site, we should focus on and analyze all the images as a whole, rather than letting the “group portrait” represent the entire Kangjiashimenzi rock art. The different techniques and chronological relationships of these various images indicate a long tradition of rock art creation, possibly spanning thousands of years. Collecting and studying all the images will enable us to research this rock art site from a broader temporal and spatial framework and a holistic perspective. Therefore, the author believes that these “neglected” images are as valuable and significant as the “group portrait” and may provide crucial clues for deciphering the Kangjiashimenzi rock art. Based on this, the author conducted a survey

and preliminary research on these “neglected” images at the Kangjiashimenzi rock art site. By combining them with the “group portrait”, the author considered the historical duration of the Kangjiashimenzi rock art and the chronological relationships among its major images.

#### 4.1 Investigation and research on images of painted rock art

In China, the most concentrated areas of painted rock art are in the southwest, such as the Huashan rock art in Guangxi, the Cangyuan rock art in Yunnan, the Wenshan rock art, and the Dahongyan rock art in Guizhou. Additionally, in recent years, some painted rock art have been discovered in the Greater Khingan Range in Northeast China. However, in the northern, central, and southeastern regions of China, rock engravings are predominant. Specifically in the Xinjiang region, the vast majority of rock art is engraved, primarily featuring animals, and is closely related to the rock art in Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Gansu, and Central Asia. Currently, the painted rock art discovered in Xinjiang is mainly concentrated in the Altay region of northern Xinjiang, with three rock art sites, all of which are cave-type painted rock art. From east to west, these are the Tangbaletas painted rock art (唐巴勒塔斯彩绘岩) in Fuyun County, the Dundebulake rock art (敦德布拉克岩画) in Altay City, and the Duogate rock art (多尔特岩画) in Habahe County. Analyzing and comparing the Kangjiashimenzi rock art within the context of Chinese painted rock art will help us gain a deeper understanding of this site and provide material for the historical and cultural exchanges along the Tianshan Corridor.

The painted rock art at Kangjiashimenzi is located below the west side of the “group portrait”, approximately one meter above the ground. The images are arranged sequentially and primarily depict hunting scenes and animals. Due to severe weathering, excoriation of rock surface, and artificial graffiti destruction, many of the images are blurred and indistinct. Among the rock paintings is a hunting image, where a figure is riding an animal (possibly a horse) (Fig. 9). These images are colored, and the method of color filling after outline sketching is not discovered. Such hunting images are

<sup>11</sup> Emmanuel Anati, Ob Cit

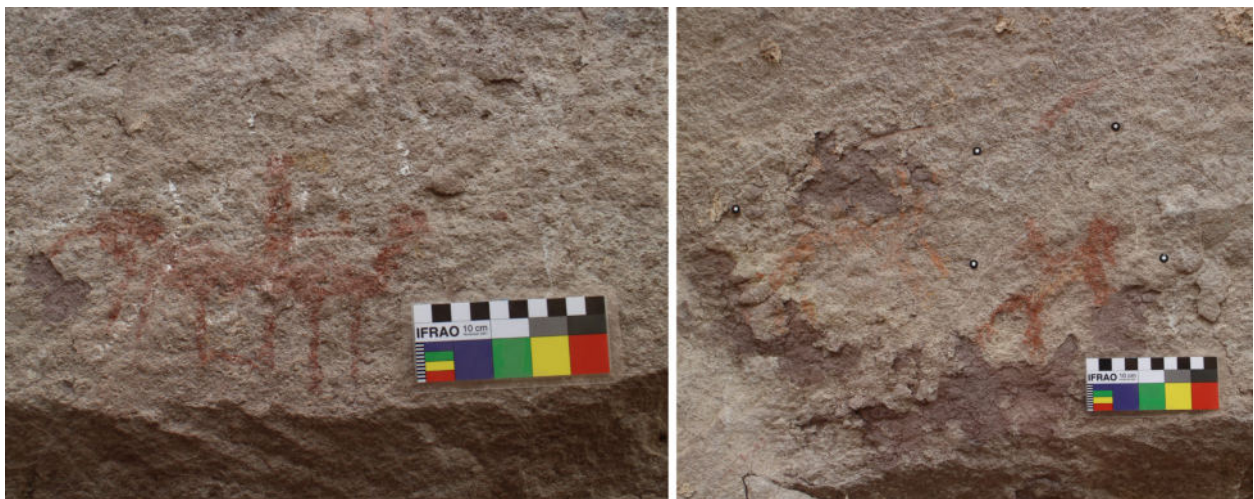


Figura 9. Hunting rock paintings in Kangjiashimenzi rock art.



common in northwest China, and they are mainly distributed in Xinjiang, but most of them are engraved. There are few hunting images is colored. In the rock paintings, a praying human figure and a squatting human figure can also be identified. The praying figure has both hands raised above the head, forming a circular shape in a praying posture. Similar images appear as rock engravings in the Yinshan Mountains of Inner Mongolia and the Mandela Mountains in the Badain Jaran Desert, and they are relatively recent in age. The squatting human figure, with legs bent and arms spread out, is found in painted form in the rock art of Handegate County in Altay. In addition, relatively rich colored squatting human images exist in Huashan of Guangxi and Cangyuan of Yunnan. Squatting human images as rock engravings are also found in Xinjiang, Qinghai, and Gansu, though they are less numerous.

In the “group portrait” of Kangjiashimenzi rock art,

there are red paintings on some human figures’ bodies (Fig. 10) and the contour of the “two-horse”. The paintings were created after carving, and the painting time was in the same period or slightly later than the carving time. There are rock paintings of humans and animals in the Handegate cave rock art in Altay City, Altay Prefecture. The rock paintings of human images are in the shape of people with slightly open arms and legs, as if they are walking hand in hand or dancing. The animal images are similar to “horses”, and the method of painting is to outline the contour first and then fill in the colors on the head and neck. Compared with the hunting rock paintings and human images in Kangjiashimenzi rock art, the rock paintings in the “group portrait” belong to different styles. The “group portrait” is more symbolic and abstract, and the painting has a strong color of primitive witchcraft. However, the rock paintings of animals and humans on the western rock wall express more life-like contents and



Figura 10. Group portrait in Kangjiashimenzi rock art.



Figura 11. Handegate cave rock art in Altay



are more documentary. Compared with the rock paintings in the Handegate cave rock art (Fig.11), the painted human images are similar in color, brushwork and creation method, and should be works of the same period. The rock paintings of animals may be earlier than them, because some animal rock art in Handegate County are darker in color, showing mulberry-colored, which is regarded as the color of the pigment in the Paleolithic Age in Kimberley, northern Australia<sup>12</sup>. In terms of style, this kind of rock art style of outlining the contour and filling in colors can be traced back to the late Paleolithic Age in Europe.

The number of rock paintings in Xinjiang is extremely small, and they are concentrated in Altay Mountains. The rock paintings of Kangjiashimenzi rock art in Xinjiang are located in the middle section of Tianshan Mountains, between Altay Mountains and Pamir Plateau, which is also an important channel for ancient east-west exchanges. The rock paintings in Kangjiashimenzi rock art do not exist alone, but exist in the rock painting system of this region, and there is a certain connection with the painted rock art in Altay area in the north and the painted rock art in Qinghai-Tibet region in the south and southeast, which may be transitional.

<sup>12</sup> Huntley, J., M. Aubert, J. Ross, H. E. A. Brand and M. J. Morwood. 2013. One colour, (at least) two minerals: a study of mulberry rock art pigment and a mulberry 'quarry' from the Kimberley, northern Australia. *Archaeometry* 57(1): 77-79.

#### 4.2 Investigation and research on petroglyph animal images

On the west side of the rock wall of the "group portrait" in Kangjiashimenzi rock art and on the large stones scattered on the ground, there are petroglyph animal images, whose styles and creation methods are basically the same as those of the animal images. On the west side of the rock wall of the "group portrait" in Kangjiashimenzi rock art, about two meters high from the ground, there are dozens of animal images. The animals depicted are about ten centimeters long, and their heads are facing east, that is, facing the position of the "group portrait". The animals involve horses, sheep, deer, etc. (Fig. 12). Except for the deer in the upper left corner of the image which is punctuated chiseled, the other animal images on the rock surface are all polished and engraved, with relatively smooth lines. The deer-shaped image is highly summarized with lines in the body and limbs, forming a silhouette shape on the side. The antlers are prominent in the shape and appear tree-like. This kind of deer image appears in the petroglyph of animals on the rock wall and is also common in the Eurasian steppe. It is a common style in the deer rock art in this area. On the west side of the rock wall of the "group portrait", near the rock paintings of animals, there are two similar sheep images, one big and one small (Fig. 13). The images highly summarize the outline of the animals with concise lines, showing a silhouette shape on the side. The small image



**Figura 12.** Animal images in Kangjiashimenzi rock art.



**Figura 13.** Sheep images in Kangjiashimenzi rock art.



is located at the tail of the large image, and both images are in a running pose, full of dynamics. The two images seem to be mother and son, or chasing each other. There is also a sheep image on the west rock wall. The body shape is sketched with straight lines. The cleat presents the arc shape of complex lines. As for the image shape, straight lines are combined with curves, and singlet lines are combined with complex lines. A few strokes stand out markedly on the rocks. On the large stones scattered on the ground, there are two sheep images, and the cleats present the half circle of complex lines. A stylized meaning is contained. This feature is quite common in sheep images of northwest regions like Xinjiang, Ningxia and Qinghai.

The rock paintings and animal images in Kangjiashimenzi rock art reflect contents that are different from the “group portrait”, mostly embodying hunting and nomadic cultures. As Russian scholar Weinstein argues, the mid-first millennium BC was a period when nomadic people generally emerged and expanded in the Eurasian steppe, and they also appeared around this time in the Sayan-Altai region north of the Mongolian steppe. European sinologist Jaroslav Průšek has a similar view; he believes that the migration and invasion of “barbarians” from the eastern Eurasian steppe into China was related to the great migrations of the Cimmerians and Scythians from the western steppe, and both were triggered by the emergence of a new economic and social form on the Eurasian steppe around 1000 BC. This new economic and social form was based on nomadism with large herds of domesticated animals, especially horses. This new economic wave led to the division of new resource areas and the emergence of some nomadic warriors who expanded their territories to adjacent regions, thus causing turmoil in the entire Eurasian steppe, with changes at one end quickly affecting the other end<sup>13</sup>. The frequent migrations of nomadic tribes and exchanges between tribes promoted cultural interconnection and mutual influence. The differences in styles of animal petroglyph in the Eurasian steppe are mainly reflected in the timing, while from a synchronic perspective, there is convergence in expression and style across a wide range of regions.

There are two pairs of “two-horse” and tiger images in the Kangjiashimenzi rock art. The “two-horse” are

two horses standing side by side, facing each other with their heads and limbs aligned; the tigers are depicted in a running pose with broken line patterns on their body. Both the “two-horse” and the tigers are highly abstract and decorative. In terms of style and creation methods, they differ greatly from the petroglyph animal images on the west side of the rock wall and the large rocks below; the “two-horse” and tiger images are more abstract and symbolic, with totemic implications, and date earlier than the petroglyph animal images. The petroglyph animal images are more realistic and life-like. From the perspective of creation methods, weathering degree, and stylistic characteristics, the “two-horse” and tigers date earlier; the animal images on the west side of the rock wall and the large rocks below are relatively recent and are the latest images in this rock art site. The petroglyph animal images in Kangjiashimenzi rock art are similar in style and shape to the animal petroglyph widely distributed in the Yinshan and Helan mountain ranges in Xinjiang and northwestern China, and their dates are also comparable, reflecting a realistic depiction of nomadic life.

#### 4.3 Investigation and research on cupules

Chinese cupules are mainly concentrated in eastern coastal areas and central plains, and most of them are located in Henan province. In addition, they are relatively concentrated in Anshan of Liaoning, Lianyungang of Jiangsu, and Wanshan of Taiwan. In terms of form, the cupules in the Central China exhibit more diverse combinations and greater quantities. Some cupules appear alongside grooves, broken line patterns, grid patterns, spiral patterns, and concentric circles (Fig. 14). It is common to find dolmens, stone circles, and cairns near cupules. According to current statistics on rock art in Xinjiang, not many cupules have been discovered. This scarcity is partly due to a lack of recognition of cupules as rock art in earlier surveys. Cupules were often not included in the category of rock art until the large-scale discovery of cupules in Henan. With the increasing reports and in-depth research on cupules, they have gradually entered the scope of rock art investigations and studies. Previous investigations and studies of the Kangjiashimenzi rock art did not reveal any research on these cup marks. According to the author’s investigation, the cupule belongs to “cup marks”. The diameter is about 11 centimeters, and the depth is about 7 centimeters. It was made via direct percussion techniques, and the wall



Figura 14. Cupules of West Yulan Mountain Villa in Anshan city (A), “plum blossom” cupules of Juci Mountain in Xinzheng City (B), “cup marks” in Jiangjunya Petroglyphs of Lianyungang City (C).

<sup>13</sup> Zhong Heng (钟焯): *Reinterpreting Inner Asian History* (《重释内亚史》), Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2017, Page 81.



surface of cupules is smooth. (Fig. 15).

There are currently over a hundred interpretations of cupules, including associations with astronomy, blood sacrifice cups, holy water cups, sexual symbols, the sun, the moon, climate change, roads, records of life and death, or war. Chen Zhaofu (陈兆复) believes that “in ancient Eastern religions, particularly in ancient and later Indian religions, cupules in sacrificial statues are mostly related to the worship of the mother—fertility of the land, symbolizing the beginning of all life.” In her book *North American and Siberian Pacific Coast Rock Drawings (Модель Вселенной в системе образов наскального искусства Тихоокеанского побережья Северной Америки (Проблема этнокультурных контактов коренного населения Северной Америки и аборигенов Сибири))*, Okladnikov mentions that when North American Indian women were about to give birth, their husbands would go to the mountains to carve circular cup marks to pray for a smooth childbirth. Cupules found in many parts of the world are considered symbols of recreation worship. In Japan and South Korea, cupules are directly referred to as “sexual holes.” Tang Huisheng (汤惠生), in his article “Jue, Que, Cupules, and Hoofprint Tradition Rock Art”, discusses cupules and believes they symbolize a connection to the heavens<sup>14</sup>. The grooves linking the cupules are pathways to the heavens, and the cupules are remnants of the shamanic belief system in ancient China centered on “connecting to the heavens”. Regarding the Kangjiashimenzi cupules, its exact meaning cannot be

<sup>14</sup> Tang Huisheng (汤惠生): Jue, Que, Cupules, and Hoofprint Tradition Rock Art (《缺、阙、凹穴以及蹄印岩画》), *Ethnic Arts* (《民族艺术》), 2011, Issue 3, Pages 97-102.

accurately determined at this time. Whether it symbolizes reproduction worship or shamanic civilization, it connects with the “group portrait” in terms of meaning. Considering its creation method and the dating of cupules in other regions, the author believes this cupule is one of the earlier images in the Kangjiashimenzi rock art. Although it is difficult to determine the chronological relationship between the cupule and the “group portrait”, it is almost certain that it predates the rock paintings and animal images on the western rock wall and scattered stones.

#### 4.4 Investigation and research on broken line pattern images

They are on the same rock of cupules. On the back of the rock (the height of the east side of the rock is 60 cm, the height of the west is 85 cm, the cupules face the south, and the broken line patterns face the north and are against the rock surface of animal images), several east-west broken line patterns are arranged in parallel. According to the observation and nick, the broken line patterns are the man-made products created with the knocking and chiseling method. The lines are relatively smooth, and the nick presents a “U” shape. (Fig. 16) Similar to the cupules mentioned earlier, this broken line pattern rock art was also not previously included in the category of Kangjiashimenzi rock art. In terms of the creation method and weathering intensity, the broken line patterns might be created in the same period as cupules or later, and they were also earlier than the rock paintings and animal images.

In the interpretation of rock art, while we can place the images within the “text structure” of the rock art, the

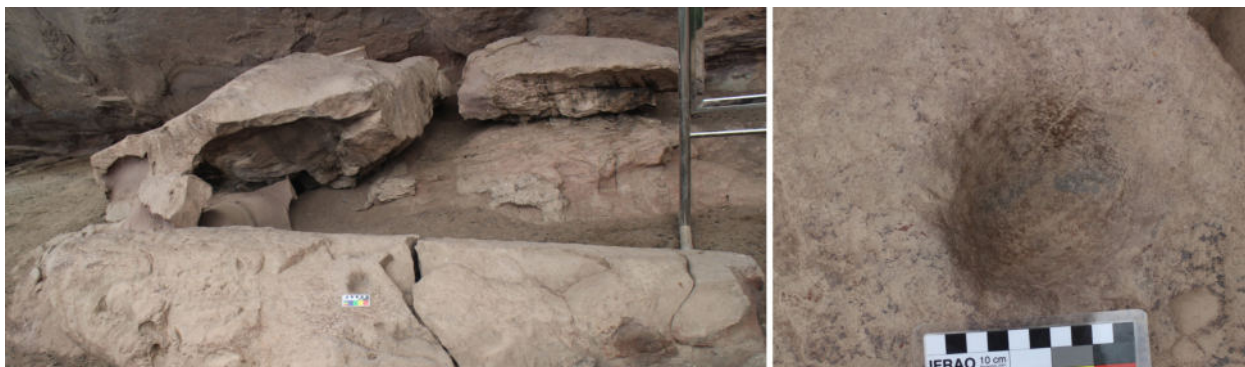


Figura 15. Cupules in Kangjiashimenzi rock art of Xinjiang.



Figura 16. Broken line patterns in Kangjiashimenzi rock art



interpretation of their meanings remains vague in some aspects. Just as when Sautuola's young daughter first saw the bull figures on the ceiling of the Altamira cave, she could recognize them; this did not mean she could understand the symbolic and meaning system of Cantabria from tens of thousands of years ago, but merely that she could recognize the content indicated by the figurative images. Although numerous figurative rock art images provide us with indications for interpretation, when we face abstract figures such as "cupules" and "broken line patterns", the interpretation becomes challenging and difficult to verify. Regarding the positivist explanations of such images in rock art, it is necessary to mention the neuropsychological and shamanistic theories of South African rock art scholar James David Lewis-Williams, who is currently the only researcher interpreting rock art from the perspective of neuropsychological experiments.

Lewis-Williams and Thomas Dowson conducted research on rock art from a neuropsychological perspective at the University of the Witwatersrand, focusing on the connection between universal cognitive patterns in human neuropsychology and shamanism, particularly the types of hallucinations generated by the structure of the human nervous system. They analyzed European Paleolithic rock art using medical and ethnographic materials, and their work has had a significant influence on rock art studies in Europe and Africa. They established a laboratory at the University of the Witwatersrand dedicated to the study of hallucinogens and developed a neuropsychological model for the different stages of consciousness under the influence of hallucinogens. This model strongly supports the relationship between subjective hallucinations and states of consciousness. On a global scale, despite cultural and environmental differences across regions, the universal applicability of this theory is based on the neurological uniformity of humans. Based on experimental data from the neuropsychological laboratory, Lewis-Williams demonstrated why art forms in hunting-gathering societies around the world exhibit such striking similarities. He explained that abstract images like "broken line patterns" are products of shamanism, depicting the images seen through "inner vision" during altered states of consciousness induced by shamanic practices. The author agrees with Williams' view that during the widespread practice of shamanism across various regions, broken line patterns emerged from inner vision and persisted through subsequent generations. However, the occurrence of broken line patterns is vast in both geographical scope and temporal span, appearing in the art of the Eskimos in the Northern Hemisphere to the Aboriginal art of Australia in the Southern Hemisphere, from prehistoric pottery and rock art to contemporary indigenous art. Therefore, the discussion of such patterns must be situated within specific local cultural contexts. Considering the shamanic traditions of the Saka people in this region and the shamanic implications of the "group portrait", it is possible that the cupules and broken line patterns are products of early shamanism.

#### V. Discussion of the age value and cultural value of the Kangjiamenshizi rock art

According to the nick, style and laminated of "group portrait" in Kangjiamenshizi rock art, the author considers that they were not completed in the same period. Instead, there was a duration of production, when more images

were added continuously. The image of "two-horse" was drawn the earliest, followed by "group portrait". Moreover, the creation years of human images in the "group portrait" can be further divided. According to the archaeological analysis on surrounding remains of Kangjiamenshizi rock art, the author thinks that the main image of Kangjiamenshizi rock art is the product of clan communes' religious rites about 3,000 years ago. Produced under the culture type of nomadism and agriculture, it reflects the idea of clan rights and reproduction worship, and is the remains of shamanism. The "group portrait" shows a certain cultural correlation with Central Asia rock art in expressive style. However, due to the unclear cultural links between the Stone Age cultures in Xinjiang and Central Asia, it is not possible to determine the specific relationship and communication path between the Kangjiamenshizi rock art and Central Asian rock art. The animal images share extensive connections with the nomadic cultures of Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, Gansu, and Central Asia. Cupules and broken line patterns, which are present globally, are results of early common human consciousness.

Traditional research on the Kangjiamenshizi rock art has primarily focused on the "group portrait." This study fills the gap by investigating other images at this site, incorporating them into the broader context of Kangjiamenshizi rock art and providing a more "holistic" perspective. Based on the production traces and degree of weathering, the author believes that the cupules and broken line patterns are quite ancient, but their chronological relationship with the "group portrait" remains uncertain. It is also possible that the cupules and broken line patterns date back as far as ten thousand years. Current research indicates that the "group portrait" is roughly dated to around 3,000 years ago and are remnants of the Saka people. However, there are still chronological distinctions within the group figures themselves. Additionally, the images of "two-horse" and tigers may predate the human images. The petroglyph of animals on the western side of the Kangjiamenshizi rock face and on the scattered large rocks (excluding the "two-horse" and tigers) date back one to two thousand years, or even more recent times. These animal images can be further categorized into various stylistic types corresponding to different time periods and cultures. The painted rock art and the petroglyph belong to different systems. The exact dating awaits scientific dating methods such as thermoluminescence. Current evidence suggests that the pictographs are more recent than the cupules and broken line patterns but earlier than the animal petroglyph. The chronological relationship between the rock paintings of the "group portrait" remains uncertain.

The chronological age of rock art should not be the sole criterion for evaluating its value. Whether early or more recent, all rock art reflects the material and spiritual culture of the people who created it. The creation of rock art in a region often spans a "time period" rather than a "point in time", possibly extending over thousands of years. This means that rock art creation in a particular place could have a long tradition and continuity. In analyzing rock art, it is important to avoid "misconstructions" of image and time. The "temporal continuity of rock art creation" demands an analysis from a "diachronic" perspective, integrating ecological changes and the evolution of social and historical culture, viewing the styles and meanings of rock art images as fluid and



dynamic. This approach should be applied not only in the regional analysis of rock art but also in the study of individual rock art sites or specific images (considering the laminated of images). Additionally, due to Xinjiang's geographic location as a link between the eastern and western parts of the Asian continent, numerous groups have historically migrated along routes like the Tianshan Corridor, the edge of the Junggar Basin, and the Altai Mountains. This has resulted in a rich variety of material cultural remains, influenced by the evolvement and transformation of various cultural elements. Research on the Kangjiashimenzi rock art should emphasize the "synchronic" relationships between different rock art regions. From the human images in Kangjiashimenzi rock art, connections with Central Asian cultures can be observed. There are also relationships between the painted rock art and the rock paintings found in Altai and Tibet-Qinghai, animals petroglyph and animal depictions across the Eurasian steppe and northwestern China. Rock art research requires a scientifically empirical attitude, using constant cross-verification to approximate the "truth" of the creation period. This involves attempting to understand the "emotions" and "intentions" of the original creators, as well as the contexts and processes of rock art creation ceremonies. Such an approach can better promote the discovery of the value of rock art within contemporary social structures, allowing this ancient cultural heritage to shine in modern times.

In the preface to *The Collection of Pottery of Gaochang* (《高昌陶集》), Huang Wenbi (黄文弼) wrote: "We believe that the spread of Eastern and Western cultures indeed passed through Xinjiang. Xinjiang, like

a water pipe, has one end as the water tower and the other end as the faucet. The water from the tower must pass through Xinjiang to reach the faucet. Therefore, if we want to study the spread of Eastern and Western civilizations, we must seek traces in Xinjiang, which is beyond doubt<sup>15</sup>." Since ancient times, Xinjiang has been a crucial corridor for East-West communication and an important part of the Eurasian steppe, rich in cultural diversity and heritage. Xinjiang rock art represented by the Kangjiashimenzi rock art include numerous and diverse petroglyphs and pictographs, and span a vast timeframe from ancient times to historical periods. This art shows both similarities and differences in style, color, and themes when compared to rock art from China's northwestern regions such as Qinghai, Ningxia, Gansu, Inner Mongolia and from Russia and Central Asian countries. Due to its historical role as a passageway and bridge for East-West cultural exchanges, the rock art at Kangjiashimenzi, located at a crossroads, exemplifies the fusion and integration of multiple cultures. It holds significant importance for studying early ethnic migrations and cultural exchanges and integration across the Eurasian steppe.

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<sup>14</sup>Huang Lie (黄烈), ed.: *Huang Wenbi Historical and Archaeological Essays* (《黄文弼历史考古论集》), Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing House, 1989, Page 109

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# BOLETÍN APAR

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