

DISCOVERY OF ROCK CARVINGS AT CHINGAI BANDA AND SHAIKH SHANDA

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Introduction

Rock carvings in the Northern Areas of Pakistan are a well known subject to all scholars of the field. Including inscriptions, these carvings of diverse nature have been unveiled from numerous sites in here by the German and Pakistani scholars over the years. Ancient rock carvings are also reported from various places in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) in the lower areas and adjoining side valleys along the routes traversed by merchants as well as alien soldiers. Gandhara, or the Peshawar Valley, was the meeting point of foreign and indigenous cultures, which have left their imprints not only on every sphere of life of the locals, but, also, on the face of rocks and cliffs throughout the area.

While searching for clues of the pre-Muslim period cemeteries, the present author detected some ancient rock-carvings at Bajaur and Mohmand Agencies as well as at other places in the Peshawar valley in the NWFP. We are presenting here two of the sites, Chingai Banda and Shaikh Shanda Baba, for the interest of the academics. Both of the sites are located in the northwestern fringe of the Peshawar valley where the boundaries of the Mohmand Agency and District Charsadda meet. The ancient graveyard of *Katozai*, from where monolithic pillars and the *Hashtnagar ritual pot* are reported earlier, is not far from here. Similar ritual pots have been associated with the movements of the Indo-Aryans (Mohammadzai 2001). Another cemetery at Zareef Koroona, which is also believed to be associated with the Aryans (Gulzar 1973) lies to the southwest at a distance of few kilometers from the current carving site. Close proximity of all these ancient sites indicates the flow of ancient peoples, who stayed here for a long period before their advance onward to the fertile Indus and Ganges plains.

Location No. 1: Chingai Banda Rock Carving

The Chingai Banda carving site, located in the Charsadda district approximately three kilometres northwest of the Dāmān village, can be approached from the main Shabqadar-Tangi road diverting westwards near Matta Mughal Khel village, which is well known for its textile cottage industry. The carving spot can be reached following an old caravan trail connecting Dand a small hamlet to the west, with the Hashtnagar plain via Kṛappa hills. The engravings are made on different rocks and cliffs on the slopes of a hill called Bege Sar, above which is Bibi Suka (BibiThukah), a prominent peak 1075m high in the Kṛappa hills (Pl.1a). The site lies in a narrow hollow two hundred metres southwest of the abandoned hamlet of Chingai Banda, at Lat. 34°-17'N and Long. 71°-29'E. The nearest habitation is at Mian Patē. More than fifty metres above the ground level, human and animal figures are carved on projecting cliffs, overlooking the vast Peshawar valley in the southeast. Directly facing the sun, huge blocks of the rock have been moved away from the hill and obstructing part of the course

of a hill torrent, *khwar*, below the site. An ancient trail, running east-west adjacent to the site, is now used by donkeys, mules and camels for transporting goods from the Mohmand Agency to the Peshawar valley.

The following is a brief outline of the rock-carvings at the site.

Rock No. 1

Size: 110x65 cms.

Number of Figures: 4

1. An unidentified figure
2. A human figure running to his left.
3. A human figure with spreading arms.
4. A male human figure with raised arms and wide open legs.

Rock No. 2

Size: 95x70 cms.

Number of Figures: 2

1. A male human figure with stretched arms and open legs.
2. A cross symbol, representing a human figure.

Rock No. 3

A large wide, smooth rock.

Number of figures: 3

1. A bow with arrow pointing upwards.
2. An unidentified animal with long neck, facing to left.
3. A human figure, with spreading arms and wide open legs in a semi circle.

Rock No. 4

Size: 170x90 cms.

Number of Figure: 1

1. A human figure having hanging arms.

Rock No. 5

Size: 290x170 cms.

Number of Figures: 35 (Pl.3a)

The rock, blackish brown in colour with localised cracks, seems to be part of a bigger rock displaced from the nearby hill. The natural smoothness of its surface might have tempted the carvers to transform their ideas into figures. Most of the figures are drawn on the lower half of the rock, while

the upper half has four figures only. It indicates that the carver standing on the ground has drawn on the part within his reach. There are signs of dots, which seem to be raw sketches of figures left unfinished due to some reasons. Detail of the figure is as follow.

1. A semicircle.
2. A spear pointing upwards.
3. A human figure with stretching arms and open legs.
4. A cross symbol.
5. A human figure standing on horseback, holding its reins in left hand. The horse is facing to the right.
6. A small standing human figure. His right arm is hanging, while the left one is raised in L position.
7. A relatively larger human figure on horseback holding its reins in his right hand and a battle-axe in the raised left one. The horse is facing to the right.
8. A standing human figure.
9. Attached to figure 8 is a somewhat smaller human standing figure.
10. A standing human figure with stretched arms but no head. (?)
11. Two horizontal dotted lines, one above the other.
12. Two longer dotted lines one above the other, connecting figures 8,9,10.
13. A human figure with hanging arms and right leg in horizontal position as if running to left.
14. A human figure on horseback to left. The figure is wearing something on the head. The face is also treated differently as compared to other human figures, and seems to be a special figure, i.e. a king or commander of the invading army.
15. A thinly made standing human figure, holding something in left hand.
16. In front of the rider king's (?) figure (#14) is a another standing human figure to right.
17. A standing human figure with hanging arms, immediately below the king's (?) horse.
18. Another standing human figure close to figure #17 facing each other.
19. A circle full of dots to the rear of the king's (?) figure.
20. A standing human figure with curved hands.
21. A standing human figure, just below the circle of dots to the right of figure #20.
22. Just below figures #17,18 is a somewhat thinner human figure having left hand extended.
23. Below figure #20 is a standing human figure with protuberant head. His right hand is slightly elevated.
24. A small standing figure to the right of figure #23 having two legs.
25. Below figure #24 is another human figure at the end of the rock. It has prominent head with right hand raised while the left one is hanging.
26. To the left of figure #25 is a standing figure with stretched arms.
27. To the left of figure #26 is a small standing figure.
28. Below figure #27 is a small human figure with extended arms as if running.
29. At the end of the rock is a somewhat longer male figure. He has hanging arms and disproportionate legs.

30. Above figure #29 is a human figure. It is not clear whether it is standing or riding on some animal which is facing to right. He has hanging arms.
31. Figure #30 is either holding something in its left hand, or it is another small human figure with distinct body, arms and legs.
32. To the left of figure #30 is another human figure with prominent legs, but the upper body is tarnished.
33. To the left of figure #32 is another human standing figure, having both arms stretched.
34. To the left of figure #33 is a small human figure almost attached to the legs of figure #33.
35. Below figure #33 is a small human standing figure with right arm extended, while the left one is hanging.

Rock No: 6

Size: 380x185 cms.

Number of Figures: 43

Situated about three metres to the left of rock No.5, there is another huge rock, which has the largest concentration of engraved figures at the site. Like the previous one, its colour is also blackish brown and cracks have divided it into five distinct portions. Likewise, for convenience we have described it into five parts, i.e., A to E. Starting from the left-hand side and ending on the upper portion of the rock, these figures are as follow.

Part: A

Number of Figures: 4

The figures as compared to other portions of this rock are deeply executed.

1. A male figure, placing his hands on knees of his stretched legs.
2. A male figure, a little larger in size than #1, also placing his long hands on knees.
3. A male figure just above figure #2, having stretched arms. But unlike other human figures, its body is shown with three vertical lines and the feet are also shown with horizontal strokes.
4. Above figure #1 are three distinct dots at the edge of the rock. Two dots with some gap are in a parallel line, while the central one is placed above the two. The space in between is surprisingly equal, thus forming an exact triangle.

Part: B

Number of Figures: 29 (Pl. 1b)

1. A human standing figure with stretching arms and a big dot in the middle of the body.
2. To the left of figure #1 is a relatively smaller standing male figure. He has hanging arms and a horizontal line below the feet.
3. To the left of figure #2 is another standing figure with hanging hands.
4. Below figure #3 is a dimly carved human figure with hanging arms.
5. Below figures #2,3 is engraved a human standing figure with inverted V shaped legs, spreading arms with fingers (the only example noted).

6. To the right of figure #5 is a blurred figure forming a rectangle with strokes at the upper and lower corners.
7. Below figure #6 is a confusing figure. It seems to be the plan of a home with a courtyard and rooms or it may be some type of a cart (?).
8. To the left hand side of figure #5 is a human standing figure, with right hand raised and left one hanging. He is also standing on a horizontal line like figure #2. There are two big dots in front and rear of the figure.
9. Below figure #7 is a standing male figure with hanging arms.
10. Below figure #8 is a male standing figure.
11. To the left of figure #5 is a man on horseback. He is holding its reins in right hand, while the left arm is stretched. The horse is facing to right.
12. Below figure #11 is an unidentified figure.
13. To the left of figure #8 is a standing human figure with hanging arms.
14. Below figure #13 is a standing human figure. His right hand is extended and left one hanging.
15. In front of figure #14 is another human standing figure of the same size.
16. To the left of figure #15 is an unidentified figure.
17. Below figure #12 is a standing male figure with hanging arms.
18. To the left of figure #17 is a smaller male figure with spreading arms. There is also a horizontal line below.
19. Below figure #18 is a standing male figure at the lower end of the rock.
20. To the left of figure #11 is an unidentified figure.
21. Below figure #20 is a human standing figure with hanging arms.
22. Below figure #21 is an unidentified figure
23. To the left of figure #20 are three circles one above the other, each having a dot in the middle. There is a short vertical line to the right of the top circle, also another one to the right of the remaining two circles.
24. To the left of figure #23 is a male standing figure, having hanging arms.
25. To the left of figure #24 is a man on horseback proceeding to left. There are two dots on either side of the rider at shoulder level.
26. Below figure #24 is another horse rider.
27. To the left of figure #26 is a male standing figure having hanging arms.
28. To the left of figure #27 is an unidentified figure
29. Below figure #26 is a standing human figure with hanging arms.

Part: C

Number of Figures: 7 (Pl. 2a)

1. On the upper portion of this rock is a circle, inside which is a cross symbol.
2. Below the bigger circle are two other circles, but smaller in diameter. There are dots in the centre of both the two.
3. At the edge of this portion is a blurred figure.(may be a man on horseback)
4. Above figure #3 there is a man on horseback.
5. To the left of figure #4 is a male standing figure, placing his hands on knees.
6. Above figure #4 is a standing human like figure.
7. To the left of figure #4 is a human standing figure, having hanging hands.

Part: D

Number of Figures: 2 (Pl. 2a)

Though this portion has two figures only, but the scene is quite unusual.

1. A male standing figure with raised hands. He holds a long sword or a club in his right hand and seems to be ready to strike.
2. Below is a male standing human figure with short hanging hands. The interesting thing here is that this figure is without head. A very thought provoking scene indeed.

Part: E

Number of Figure:1

This is a long rectangular upper portion of the rock, projected forward, because of the pressure of fallen rocks from the back and above. It consists of a single figure only.

1. A long, thin standing human figure with outstretched arms.

Rock: No. 7

Size: 32x30 cms.

Number of Figure:1

This rock is situated three metres below rock no. 6. A single figure has covered its entire surface.

1. A human figure on horseback moving to left. The rider is wearing a long cap and holds reins of the horse.

Rock No. 8

Size: 200 x 107 cms.

Number of Figures: 5 (Pl. 3b)

This rock too, like the previously mentioned one, is of the same colour and has developed many cracks.

1. Lower half of a male figure. The upper body has been left unfinished.
2. To the left of figure #1 is a human standing figure. It has long hanging arms.
3. There is an unidentified figure to the left of figure #2.
4. A male standing figure is engraved above figure #3. His right arm is raised, while the left one is hanging. His head is also missing.
5. To the left of figure #3 is a human figure on horse back to the left. The rider has both the arms stretched. Each arm has a single dot below. There are also two smaller dots on either side of the head. Near the left arm are three vertical lines emerging from a horizontal line.

Location No. 2: *Shaikh Shanda Baba*

The engravings here are done on an isolated outcrop situated a kilometre southwest of Dāmān at Long. 71°-31' E and Lat. 34°-17' N. There is a vast graveyard to the west of Koṭe', a small hamlet. The locality is known to the people for the grave of a saint known as Shaikh Shanda Baba. Fifty metres southeast of the saint's grave is a lone rock, which has been extensively cut by the local populace for procuring stone for their local use for years.

The engravings are unclear as compared to those of site no. 1. They appear to have been carved with the same striking technique but somewhat cruder in appearance. It may be earlier in date than site no. 2. Here figures are engraved on isolated rocks, situated about a kilometre away from the nearest hills in its southwest, which cover a small area 20x15 metres approximately (Pl. 4a). Their average height is not more than three metres from the present ground level. The locality of the engraving known as Janjora is associated with mythical stories, which is a common practice with old places anywhere. It is an active quarry site of building material for the local people. Having no knowledge of their historical importance, the local people have utilised many carved stones in the construction of their homes. An easy source at hand, the remaining engraved stone will also be picked up by the ignorant and poor locals, sooner or later, for building purposes. We, however, were able to observe the following graffiti on the rocks at the site, from east to west.

Rock No. 1

No. of Figures: 3 (Pl.5a)

1. A horse rider who is engraved above the other two figures.
2. Figure of another horse rider, but smaller than the above one.
3. A wheel with four spokes, or a circle with a cross sign.

Rock No. 2

No. of Figure: 1 (Pl.4b)

1. A cross inside a circle and dots in two compartments.

Rock No. 3

No. of Figures: 2 (Pl. 6b)

1. A cross, inside a circle with visible dots in one compartment.
2. Below #1 is another cross inside a bigger circle. There are bigger dots in its two compartments.

Rock No. 4

No. of Figure: 1 (Pl. 5b)

1. A circle having four bigger dots. Its upper portion is detached from the rock.

Rock No. 5

No. of Figures: 4 (Pl. 6a)

Several figures are engraved here, but seem to have been knowingly defaced. Some of these are;

1. Two circles having crosses.
2. A bow with arrow.
3. A flower with stalk and petals.
4. A three arched / mountain design.

Rock No. 6

No. of Figures: 3

1. A circle on top of which is a line longer than the diameter of the circle.
2. An animal rider shown like a single line.
3. A circle within a square or probably an eye design.

Rock No. 7

No. of Figures: 5

1. A rectangle: having a cross sign inside.
2. Circle: having several dots inside.
3. Circle: with dots in the middle which looks like a flower
4. An unfinished design. A vertical line turning to right, then extending below, making a curve and proceeding to the right.
5. A longer unfinished figure with dots in long gaps. Its left side is broken.

Rock No. 8

No. of Figures: 4

1. An animal in profile.
2. A symbol like the Arabic numeral 3.
3. An unfinished standing human figure.
4. Another symbol with Arabic numeral 3.

Rock No. 9

No. of Figures: 4 (Pl. 5a)

1. A horse rider.
2. An unidentified figure.
3. Another unidentified figure.
4. A third unidentified figure.

Chronology:

The total number of figures at both the sites is recorded one hundred and twenty one. This number may increase if the surrounding area is explored thoroughly. The largest number of carvings, ninety-four, is found at site no. 1, where the general theme is the battle scene. Majority of them are human standing figures followed by horse-riders, circles, dots, dotted lines, arrow and bow motifs. The number of figures at site no. 2 is recorded less, twenty-seven only, at the moment because of continued consumption of stone for building activities, some of which, according to local informants, had animal figures, mostly horses. The existing ones exhibit nine circles, four horse riders, and geometric and floral patterns of barbaric style. There are not any symbols that could be specifically taken for a cult sign like stupa, fire altar, the Buddha or Bodhisattva images as found in the Northern Areas of the country. It suggests that these images are not associated, at least, with Buddhism. Thorough investigation would enable us to discern whether master engravers or ordinary peregrinators drew these signs.

Observed in the Mohmand and Bajaur Agencies as well as at other localities in and around the Peshawar valley, these rock carvings mostly have similar theme and style of depiction. Their stylistic comparison with M2 Petroglyphs indicates their date between c. 5th to 7th century AD. Circles having dots in the middle and other designs in location no 2 (Rock nos. 1-7) have striking resemblance with the like circles engraved at Dadam Das (Bemmann 2005, table 26, 34:4) and Thalpan II (Konig 2005, tables 27-31) in the Northern Areas. Moreover men standing on horseback at location no. 1 (Rock no, 5) have exact copies at Dadam Das (Bemmann 2005, table 6) and various other localities in the Northern Areas. At the present state of affairs, we may not be able to justify our claim unless it is proven with authentic datable sources, palaeographic and others, which at the moment is not available.

Similar rock carvings in a side valley near Chirat in the Nowshera district are also reported, while other areas in the Peshawar valley are yet to be explored for their presence. It is a testimony to the fact that the Peshawar valley and its neighbourhood are equally rich in this fascinating art executed on the hard surface of cliffs, rocks and boulders.

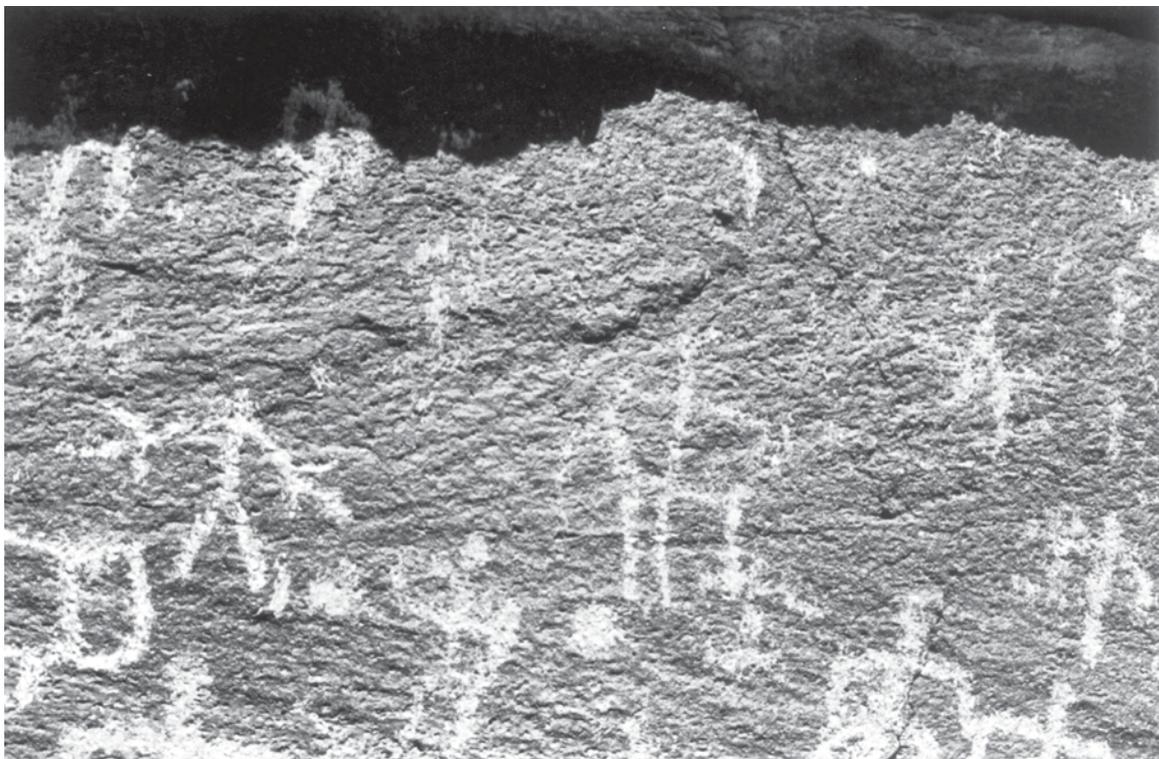
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Pl. 1a: General view of location No. 1 at *Chingai Banda*



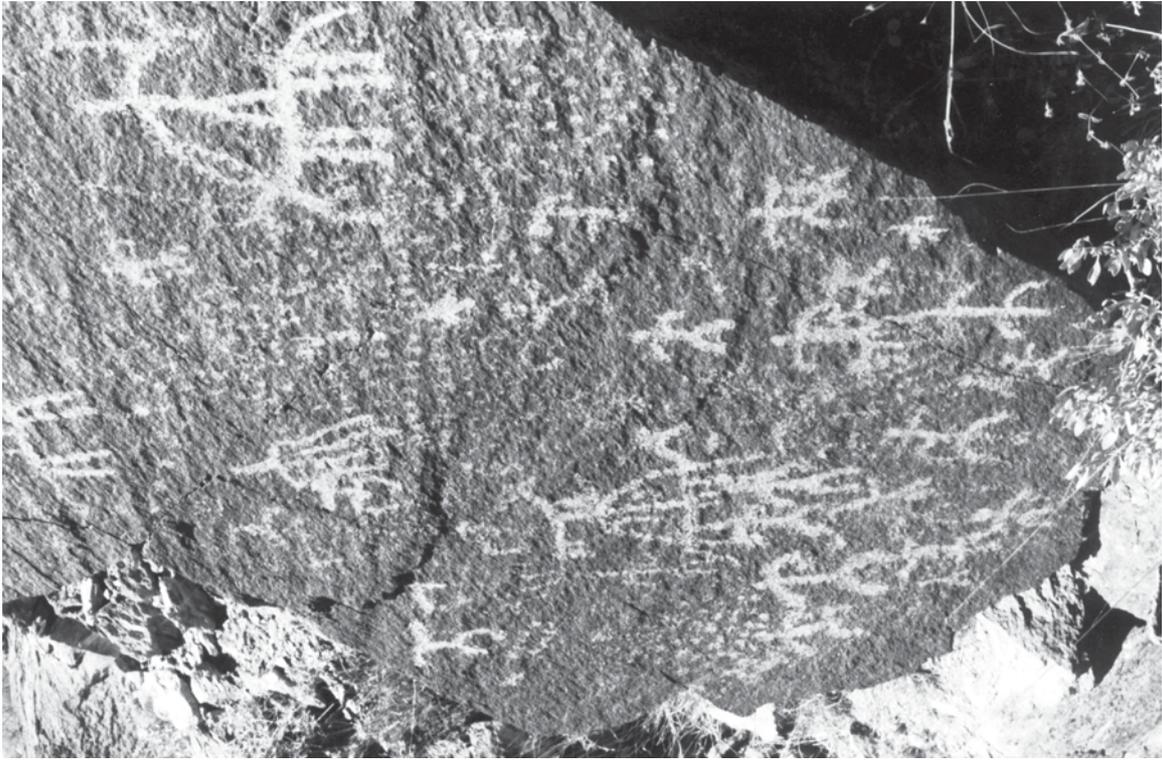
Pl. 1b: Engraved figures on rock No. 6



Pl. 2a: Horseman and other figures on rock No. 6



Pl. 2b: Circles and human figures on rock No. 6, portion D.



Pl. 3a: A battle scene, horsemen and other human figures on rock No. 6



Pl. 3b: Human figures and a man on horseback.



Pl. 4a: General view of location No. 2 at *Shaikh Shanda Baba*.



Pl. 4b: Two circles with dots in the middle at location No. 2



Pl. 5a: Man on horse back and circle with a cross inside at location No. 2



Pl. 5b: Circle with four dots, the fifth one is left unfinished.



Pl. 6a: A cluster of engravings at location No. 2



Pl. 6b: Circle with a cross motif.