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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

# A STUDY ON THE STAGES, AGES AND MEANING OF SEXUAL SACRIFICE OF THE KANGJIA SHIMENZI PETROGLYPH

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### ABSTRACT

Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph in Hutubi County has attracted much attention from the academic community since its discovery, and its stages, ages, authors and content have always been a hot topic of discussion among scholars. By teasing out the relevant literature, conducting field surveys, and comparing similar remains in its same ages such as the Xiaohe cemetery and the Gumugou cemetery in Kong Que River, this article redefines the stages of Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph. It is believed that the petroglyph has outstanding commonalities with the series of symbolic elements of the Xiaohe cemetery. The first discovery of Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph is no later than the end of the 3rd millennium BCE, or even earlier, the latest age is about the mid of the 2000 BCE, or even later; The author of the petroglyph is proposed to be one of those people of Xiaohe culture; The content of the petroglyph shows that the ancestors of Xiaohe chose the deep mountain valley in the Danxia Mountain in Kangjia Shimenzi as a sacred place, to carry out the ceremony and show the image expression of reproduction worship with the help of natural landscapes with sexual divine power.

### KEYWORDS

Kangjia Shimenzi Petroglyph, Stages, Ages, Authors, Sexual Sacrifice

## 1. INTRODUCTION

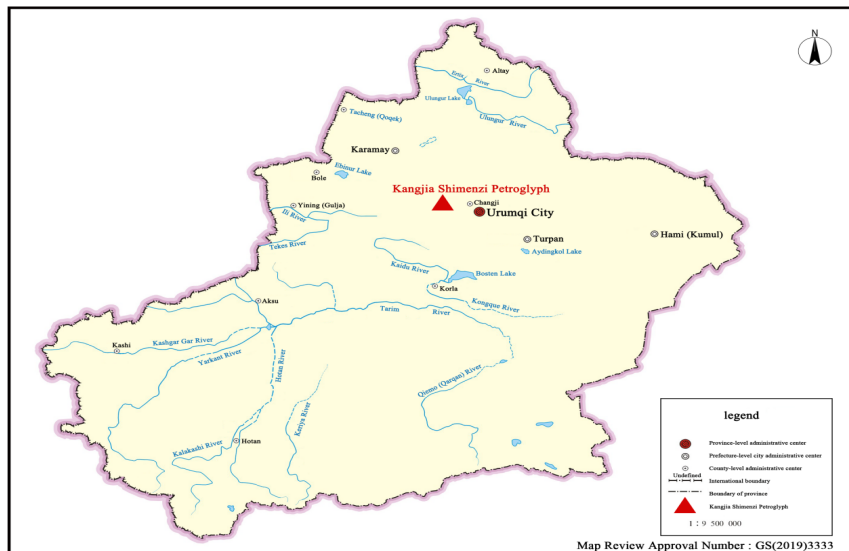
Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph is located in the valleys of the Tianshan Mountains in the southwest of Hutubi County, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (Figure 1), where the Danxia landform develops in the valley of the Tianshan Mountains, with colorful mountains towering and undulating, and some of them are majestic and continuous, some are steep and majestic, and the scenery is psychedelic. Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph, carved on flat wall 10 meters above the ground, is about 14 meters long from east to west, 9 meters high, and 126 square meters carving areas. It is covered with figures of different sizes and shapes, among them, the large figures are larger than real people, and the small ones are only 10 cm. There are more than 300 carved figures, including male and female, standing or lying down, clothed or naked. Such a grand petroglyph is rare in the world.

## 2. THE FIRST DISCOVERY OF KANGJIA SHIMENZI PETROGLYPH

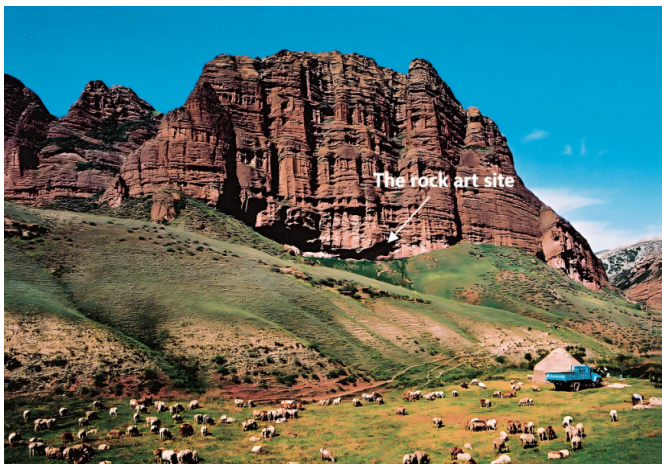
In 1983, Li Shichang, director of the Geographical Names Office of the Hutubi County People's Government, was responsible for compiling the *Atlas of Hutubie County's Geographical Names*, and under the guidance of herdsmen, he discovered Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph. He took photos and drew sketches at once. In the *Atlas of Hutubie County's Geographical Names*, he introduced that the petroglyph was carved on the "rock that 5 meters above the ground, which was located in 13 kilometers west of

Queergou, the Kemuletas Mountain. The picture is more than 4 meters long, about 2 meters wide up and down, with a vigorous painting style and the whole picture is plain. It was craved during the Northern and Southern Dynasties according to the primary evidence" (Figure 2 & 3). Since then, scholars' exploration of Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph has begun.

In 1987, Mr. Wang Binghua, under the guidance of Li Shichang, inspected this petroglyph for the first time. In 1988, he wrote an article named "History Pages Carved on Rock Walls" (Wang, 1987) to introduce this petroglyph. In the same year, he revised this article and published another article named "The Reproduction Worship Petroglyph in Kangjia Shimenzi of Hutubi County" (Wang, 1988) in the second issue of *Xinjiang Cultural Relics* in 1988. In this article, he divided the petroglyph into 8 groups, and introduced the content of the petroglyph in detail, and also clarified the age and themes of the petroglyph. It is believed that there are six aspects: Firstly, this petroglyph is a reproduction worship and its purpose is praying for population reproduction. Secondly, it is the primitive witchcraft scene. Thirdly, it is the scene of primitive dance, which is jokingly called "ancient disco". Fourth, it is a masterpiece of ancient art, which was completed before the third century BCE, and the upper limit did not exceed the first half of the first millennium BCE. Fifth, it showed the connotation of the patriarchal worship in the late primitive society. The last aspect is related to the authors of this work. They are believed to be a group of residents who were involved in the Cypriots in northern Xinjiang before the 3rd century BCE. This petroglyph is a page of precious history they carved on the rock wall.



**Figure 1** The Location of Kangjia Shimenzi Petroglyph (Drawn by Che Jing, Map Cited from MAP WORLD, National Platform for Common GeoSpatial Information Services)



**Figure 2** The Panorama of Kangjia Shimenzi Petroglyph



**Figure 3** The Authors are Observing the Petroglyph

The facial features of the figures “represented in the petroglyph have a lot commons with the Cypriots and their pointed hats described in ancient documents”. In the same year, the author of this article approved Mr. Wang’s appointments, and also expressed other opinions: the main content of Hetubi petroglyph is based on sexual pleasure, showing on the one hand, the primitive humans’ wishes to “man’s own production, the fertility of seeds”, but also reflects the human pursuit of real sexual pleasure (Liu, 1988). The former is an aspect of “the decisive factors in history”, while the latter is a universal spiritual pursuit. It also says that the primitive humans’ “sexual pleasure pursuit” is a brave and “naked pursuit” for “happiness and reality”. Later, Mr. Wang Binghua continued to explain the discovery of Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph, but his main viewpoints did not change a lot (Wang, 1991; Wang, 2014).

### 3. THE DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS

After the publication of the basic materials of the Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph, it attracted widespread attention and discussion. The main content is generally concentrated in the following three aspects, one is the times of the age, the second is the author of the petroglyph, and the third is the content of the petroglyph.

#### 3.1 The Ages of the Petroglyph

As we all know, the issue of the ages of petroglyph is the most difficult problem in the study of petroglyph, which is a bottleneck in its studies. Although the academic community of petroglyph has made many great

explorations on this topic, there are currently no effective solutions that can be widely copied. For a long time, the judgment of the age of petroglyph has basically adopted the cultural dating method, that is, comparing the factors found in petroglyph with the factors found in archaeology. If there are similar factors, the age of petroglyph will be inferred from the factors in archaeology, which is generally an approximate age range.

#### 3.1.1 The Theory of Early Iron Age

From 1000 BCE to 2 century BCE, it was the Early Iron Age on the history of Xinjiang. On the age of Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph, there are different opinions, and the most influential is Mr. Wang Binghua’s view. In 1988, Mr. Wang “analyzed from the basic historical background that the petroglyph of Kangjia Shimenzi should have been completed before the 3 century BCE. At the same time, he considered that “the petroglyph of Kangjia Shimenzi have gone through a long stage of time, and its upper limit may be in the first half period of the 1000 BCE.” Later, he compared the cultural connotation of Hetubi Rock with the reproduction worship reflected by a phallu unearthed at the Mulei Sidaogou site in Xinjiang, and the legend of the ten kings performing horse sacrifices to pray for children in the Indian epic *Ramayana: Childhood*. Besides, he also compared the horses and the feathers on the heads of the figures in the Hetubi petroglyph with the horses on the bronze plaques and the “twig-like” decorations on the bronze figure of Paravad excavated from Luristan, Iran, then it is believed that they have a cultural connection, and he concludes that the petroglyph can be dated to the first half of the

1000s BCE, but not earlier than 3,000 BCE (Wang, 1990).

Wang Binghua's perspective on ages has had a great influence in the academic community. After the release of the petroglyph materials of Kangjia Shimenzi, most scholars adopted Wang Binghua's conclusions when studying ancient art, sports, and dance through petroglyph. Mr. Wang Rong's *History of Art in the Western Regions of China* believes that "petroglyph is completed before the Warring States period (5th BCE-3rd century BCE) at the latest, or earlier in the first half of the first millennium BCE, which is reliable.... It may also be mixed with some overlapping of the late petroglyph. However, there should be no doubt that the founding of the Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph should be earlier than the Warring States period in the late primitive society." Su Beihai and others scholars believe that the Hetubi petroglyphs should be the work of the late patrilineal clan according to the concept of male reproduction worship, and the absolute age is about six or seven hundred years in the first half of the 1000 BCE (Su, 1993). Li Shuhui believes that the Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph in Hutubie County were painted by the Yueh-Chi, and were created between 201 BCE and 176 BCE or later (Li, 2013). Cui Guping believes that the dating of petroglyph "before the 3rd century BCE" (Cui, 1998); Wang Min disagreed with Lin Meicun's theory of Tocharians in 1800 BCE, believing that it was later than this age (Wang, 2007).

### 3.1.2 The Theory of Bronze Age

In 1988, Mr. Wang Binghua had mentioned the dancing figures on the petroglyph in the article "The Reproduction Worship Petroglyph in Kangjia Shimenzi of Hutubi County" (Wang, 2007), "Wearing a high hat and two feathers on the hat, such figures have been seen in the petroglyph of the Nana river basin in Siberia." The physical characteristics of the figures are also the same as those on the Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph: the upper body is an inverted triangle with a thin waist, showing as a dance image, and with a head wearing a hat ornamented with feathers. According to the research conclusions of the Soviet scholar Okladnikov, it is believed that it was a work between 1500 and 1300 BCE. It belongs to the petroglyph of the early Bronze Age". However, Mr. Wang did not reference it and instead used the method of typological analogy to use it as a reference for making inferences about the petroglyph at the Kangjia Shimenzi.

The first to propose that the Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph belonged to the Bronze Age was Mr. Tang Huisheng, a Chinese petroglyph scholar, who believed that the age of petroglyph of Kangjia Shimenzi in Hutubie should be earlier, "When it comes to the petroglyph of China and Siberia, the petroglyph of mask figures and anthropomorphic figures made by grinding are generally finished in the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age (Tang, 2001). This is especially true of petroglyph whose content is related to reproduction". Based on the expression of the hands of the dancing figures and the belief in Tsushima of the petroglyph, Lin Meicun speculates that the age of the petroglyph is roughly the same or similar to that of the Kongquehe Cemetery and the Tianshan Beilu Cemetery, so the creation age of this Tocharian religious petroglyph should be around 1800 BCE, which should be the work of the Tocharians in the Bronze Age. In 2006, the author of this article published an article named "The Era, Author and Others of Hutubi petroglyph", which systematically comparing the Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph with the Xiaohe cemetery, and found that the two were different kind of relics left by the same cultural group, and believed that the age was the Bronze Age, the upper limit of the absolute age exceeded the 2000 BCE, and the main age was in the first half of the 2000 BCE (Liu, 2006). This article also agreed that Mr. Lin Meicun's theory of Tocharians. Mr. Han Jianye adopted the author's judgment on the age of the petroglyph of Kangjia Shimenzi, and believed that the age of the petroglyph was around 2000 BCE, which belonged to the Bronze Age (Han, 2018).

### 3.1.3 Other Theories of the Ages

In addition to views above, there are some others that are highly subjective. For example, in the earliest descriptions of the petroglyph, such as *Changji Panorama* and *Atlas of Place Names in HuTubie County*, the age of the petroglyph was estimated to be around the Northern and Southern Dynasties period, which roughly corresponds to the 5th and 6th

centuries CE. Tan Fengjiang argued that, no matter based on materials from history, folklore, ethnology, and archaeology, the clothing styles and religious beliefs depicted in the petroglyph were consistent with the productive forces and production relations of the late Paleolithic era (Tan, 1992). Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the petroglyph was created during the matriarchal age, approximately 20,000 years ago. However, Qian Baquan believed that the nomadic people living north of the Tianshan Mountains in the 3rd century BCE were still in a clan society or tribal society and did not yet form a large, powerful state (Qian, 2016). It was not feasible for them to mobilize significant human and material resources to carve such large-scale petroglyph. Consequently, Qian Boquan concluded that the petroglyph at Kangjia Shimenzi was not created by the nomadic people of northern Tianshan during the 3rd century BCE and is more likely to have been painted during the latter half of the 5th century CE.

### 3.2 The Authors of the petroglyph

In 1988, Wang Binghua argued that the authors of the petroglyph should be a group of residents associated with the scythians who lived in northern Xinjiang before the 3rd century BCE (Wang, 1990). The petroglyph "depict the facial features of the figures, which show that the figures' features and decorations have a lot in common with the scythians who wearing hats that described in ancient texts." This statement also had a great impact. Mr. Wang Rong, also believes that the petroglyph were created by the scythians (Wang, 2006). Later, he added two aspects, "The first is related to the ancient inhabitants who lived in northern Xinjiang and the Tianshan area during the first half of the millennium BCE, according to relevant documentation and archaeological information, the majority of them were the scythians. The second is the description of the craving people with narrow face, dark eyes, and high nose, which is clearly owns characteristics of the Eurasian race. They wear a high hat, which is consistent with the physical characteristics of scythians as reflected in the literature... However, alongside the above-mentioned dark-eyed, high-nosed and narrow-faced figures, there are also a significant number of male figures with broad, round faces and fairly high cheekbones, which appear to be especially rough, with Mongolian characteristics. The hat is distinct from others for its feather and two pointed horns. These are all markedly different from the previous figures and their clothing. This difference is the result of conscious refinement. The inhabitants of this Mongolian are supposed to be relatively close to the former Huns." According to Su Bei and other scholars, "The features of the face and body shapes embodied in this petroglyph are clearly similar to those of the ancient scythians, so this giant reproduction worship petroglyph actually reflects the reality of the reproduction worship of the scythians in this region at that time (Su, 1993)." During the Yuan Dynasty, primitive tribes once lived here, dressed in strange costumes and were called wild people by later people, Hu said, "During the Yuan Dynasty, there was indeed a population living in the area of today's Changji area, who still lived in a primitive way. As a result, they were able to create their own petroglyph (Hu, 1998)." Li Shuhui believes that the petroglyph of the Kangji Shimenzi in Hutonbi County were painted by the Yuezhi people (Li, 2013); Qian Boquan believes that "The owner of the Kangji Shimenzi petroglyph should be the Hephthalite, who conquered Persia. Later, he married an eastern princess, whom the king sent her to the east, probably set up a shelter in the plain of Bacenbrook (Qian, 2016). Kangji Shimenzi petroglyph is not far to the shelter's north. The king of Hephthalite came to visit and noticed this great area in Kangjia Shimenzi, mobilized strong man force and material resources, to carve large murals here, praying for both the prosperity of human and the abundance of animals. The craftsmen gathered by the Hephthalite must have come from the relatively recent countries of Quechua and Uhuru, so they also carved monkey faces into the petroglyph". "As a result, the Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph became a huge and valuable relic of art remaining on the rock walls of Tianshan by the Hephthalite." Yang Fazhen believes that the petroglyph are the work of the hephthalite (Yang, 1995). In the author of this article's opinion, it may be related to the activities of the early tocharians north and south of the Tianshan Mountains (Liu, 2007).

### 3.3 The Content of the Petroglyph

Any work of art has its own specific subject of thought. After the publication of the Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph's materials, many scholars interpreted the ideas surrounding the overall and constituent elements of the petroglyph, and their views were diverse.

Wang Binghua proposed that the Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph represented the theme of reproduction worship in the form of primitive dance (Wang, 1988). It can be generally assured that the petroglyph occurred in the late stages of primitive society, the patriarchal clan society according to their basic characteristics of special reverence for the male. At that time, Hutubi region was still in the patriarchal clan society of the primitive social stage, or not far from the historical stage of that period. "As mentioned above, the author of this article believes that in addition to the reproduction worship that represents the desire for reproduction, the primitive pursuit of instinctive sexual pleasure is also an important moral displayed by the petroglyph (Liu, 1988).

The first stage of the petroglyph is located at the highest point of the overall scene. According to Song Yaoliang, the depictions of horses in the content of this stage of petroglyph "have already become symbols," representing the clan emblem of the group during that time. (Song, 1990). A group of nine tall women in the picture are naked, at least a group of the aristocracy. On the left side of the group is a lying man, naked all over. Painted in red and his genitals are fully depicted, with ball-shaped testicles and a large erect penis, pointing to the female figures. This expression can be considered as the man served the females, and the clan was still in a female-dominated matrilineal system. Chen Xiaojun points out from the visual art form of petroglyph that "At their time, the male phallus was seen as a symbol of the authority of the father and the the Creator's image (Chen, 2010). This kind of symbolic phallus also represented a creative force that enabled human beings to grow and reproduce. New graphic forms of supernatural structures, such as monkey-faced men's portraits, reveal a mysterious, uncontrollable idea that gives the shapes an illusory, compelling fascination."

Wang Min discussed the artistic expression technique of the petroglyph, and believed that the figures on the Hutubi petroglyph all used the bas-relief style of painting with a more distinctive front angle, which is greatly different with the silhouetted figures commonly used in petroglyph in the northern part of China (Wang, 2007)." Liu Wenliang and Jiang Miaoyan believe that Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph are the representatives of the modest consciousness of the ancestral people in Western China (Liu and Jiang, 2014). It shows the beautiful life of the primitive people, expresses their reproduction worship and their pilgrimage to strengthen themselves, also reflects their simple and serious spiritual pursuits, and transmits a plain and beauty of life. From the aspect of petroglyph, Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph reflects a simple craftsmanship and unique aesthetic value with the natural holiness of its environment and the harmonious beauty of its composition.

Hu Bangzhou believes that the images in which Mr. Wang Binghua describes an intersexual person are not "images of men and women in an intercourse," but rather of "two male heads sharing a female body". The man who is copulating, with an elderly man head portrait hanging on his chest, is not "a pregnant man", and it isn't an artistic expression of the decisive role of the man giving birth to a child that has finally produced a new life, as Wangbinghua considered. He recognized "The elderly man's head portrait carved on the man's chest is a type of tattoo, which signifies that the man engaging in intercourse is a respected elder in the tribe. He is the leader and primary organizer of the ongoing ritual of sexual revelry. The head portrait of the elderly man on the man's chest is the symbol of his status as an elder. The ongoing act of intercourse is not only a prerogative of the elder but also a significant component of the sacrificial rituals." Hu also argued that "the so called monkey-faced man, I think, should be understood as a wizard or priest wearing a mask, whose position in the ritual of reproduction worship is equal to that of the mentioned elder." Hu Bangzhou cited a number of ethnographic materials that confirmed the sacred status of the masked person (Hu, 1998).

Su Beihai and other scholars believed that "In the upper part of the tiger, there is another intercourse image. At the top left of the picture, there is a monkey-faced person.... An erecting genitals, straight towards a woman's private part"; "This person is very unique. According to the tribal organization at the time, this man was apparently a clan leader in the Kangjia Shimenzi district, where he was in charge of the entire clan affairs (Su, 1994). During his tenure, there were two tasks as shown in the figure: one was to increase the clan population, the second is to organize

hunts of beasts to keep the population alive and develop the livestock industry. As a clan leader, he must carry out this central task on his own." Hu Xiaohui believes that the two tiger shapes on the petroglyph are the sensors of female reproduction and transmitting female reproductive power. He also combines the story of the ten kings performing horse sacrifices to pray for children in the Indian epic *Ramayana: Childhood*, and believe that the people in the Kangjia Shimenzi also held this belief.

Gou Aiping and other scholars argue that the tall and naked women in this petroglyph are dominant in reproductive witchcraft and control the dominance of reproduction (Gou, 2022). The caves in petroglyph are the stone carving art of the female spirit, implying the relationship between the female spirit and the production of the earth. Zhang Li discussed the relationship between the dancing figures in Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph and the contemporary folk dancing poses of Uyghur, Kazakh and Kyrgyz people (Zhang, 2014). Lin Yiming, for his part, believes that the main idea of Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph in Hutubie County is to praise the state of man, rather than god, and affirm man's dominant position in the heavens and the earth (Lin, 2013). Its core meaning is to pursue the spirit of liberation of thought and unity of heaven and humanity. In addition, some scholars interpreted the Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph from different perspectives, which are basically same as that the author of this article have mentioned, so here only listed the supporting materials that the author familiarized with.

### 3.4 The New Founding under the 3D Digital Technology

In 2014, in the process of using modern scientific technology to protect the petroglyph, Mr. Liu Cheng of Northwest University in China, observed the petroglyph more subtly. The details of petroglyph was presented more clearly through 3D digital technology. The important findings of Liu Cheng's group are as follow:

First, it is found that the themes of the main characters are not reproduction worship, but a group of dancing scenes composed of a man and eight women (including double-headed figures portrait), the man lying across with protruding genitals was added in the subsequent age, and the uppermost 7 people figures, orderly in size, arranged in order, and the sense of scheme of the picture is prominent. The largest figure is different from the others, its hat is a single feather, his face is rough and angular, the proportions of his shoulders to the waist are more powerful, and his arms are more muscular, and he should be a mighty man.

Second, it was found that the entire petroglyph was not an organized, strictly planned, and completed one after another, and many places were found to be improvised, deliberately adding new theme elements to the original picture. That is to say, these additions are not in the same picture unit as the original painting, and the meaning to be expressed by the two is not unified. With the help of 3D data, it was found that the two heads in a body figure was two closely superimposed figures, a combination of two people shoulder by shoulder.

Third, it was found that there were cases of women portraying male characters, and some even changed the original female figure to a male figure.

Fourth, according to the 3D data analysis, the "prince" has a monkey face, with two big ears and ear holes, and two ornaments like genitals on his arms and buttocks, and with a female figure standing on his left that mentioned above by researchers, was originally the one who controlled the tiger, and there was no gender indication, and the genitals and bent legs, as well as the woman on the left, were added by later generations.

Fifth, animal themes were found in the figure petroglyph. Liu Cheng's discoveries are very important and open a new stage of the study of Hutubi petroglyph (Liu, 2016).

Besides the above findings, the approach of creating the petroglyph is worth to be mentioned. The Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph is a rare example that combining rock carving with rock painting worldwide (Figure 4). Wu Xinhua's research indicates that the techniques used in the creation of the petroglyph can be categorized into three types: chiseling, carving, and polishing. It is also pointed that some of the

petroglyphs was created by a single technique, while many others were created by the combination of two or three techniques. What's more, there are some petroglyphs that were finished by colored drawing. Typically, this type of petroglyph starts with the technique of grinding. Then, white or red pigments are painted over the completed petroglyph, resulting in a scene that the pictograph covered the petroglyph. Zhang Jiachen and Wu Chuke believe that the pictographs in Kangjia Shimenzi are not isolated but rather part of a larger pictograph system that exists between the Altai Mountains and the Pamir Plateau. There is a certain connection between these pictographs in the Tibetan regions of China, which may indicate a transitional phase. However, since the main content is still belong to petroglyph, and the pictographs are painted on the surface of the petroglyph, so it is still appropriate to consider the Kangjia Shimenzi rock art as petroglyph.

#### 4. THE SECTIONS OF THE PETROGLYPH

Mr. Wang Binghua divided the entire petroglyph into 9 groups, which are mainly for the convenience to introduce, without the inherently structure, and there is no inevitable internal connection between groups. According to the internal structure and changes of the petroglyph, Mr. Wu Xinhua divided the petroglyph into four sections, namely the upper section, the left section, the middle section and the right section (Figure 5). There is a certain logical relationship between the division of different sections.

##### 4.1 The Upper Section

The upper section of the petroglyph is located in the upper part of the entire picture, on a flat and smooth rock surface (Figure 6). It features eight human figures and two pairs of horses. The human figures are depicted in a completely consistent manner, with their postures orderly decreasing in size from right to left. The rightmost figure stands 2.07 cm tall. The overall picture is complete, with exquisite carving, smooth lines, and graceful postures. The facial features of the figures are meticulously detailed, showcasing a distinct style. The faces are characterized by long, high noses, slightly narrowing upward in a columnar shape,

with prominent and curved ridges. The brow bones closely follow the nasal root, and the eye sockets are deeply set. The facial contour takes on a "melon seed" shape. The necks are slender and columnar, connecting directly to the flat shoulders, creating a rigid impression. The figures have flat shoulders and constricted waists, with the upper body smoothly concave-ground into a triangular form, emphasizing the pectoral muscles. The arms extend outward horizontally, straight and slender like columns, with raised noses and sunken eyes, giving the faces a delicate and handsome appearance. The forearms are bent at a 90-degree angle, either raised upward or lowered, and the fingers are depicted in a branch-like manner. The waists are constricted and slender. The hips and upper legs are represented through concave grinding, forming a curved and rounded shape that highlights plump and full buttocks, with a fine gap left between the legs. The lower legs are distinctly separated from the upper legs, curved in an arc, and most figures are simply depicted with forward extending feet. On their heads, single or symmetrical upper lines and curves are carved, representing a unified and prescribed posture throughout the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph. These figures can be referred to as "dancing figures." The overall expression is elegant, with delicate features and well-defined contours. The slightly curved lower legs, combined with the entire body, especially the raised and lowered forearms, add a sense of dynamism to the figures, giving a somewhat coy and posed impression. The general impression is of tall, full-figured, and highly sensual artistic representations of nude females. The faces and necks of the figures are painted white only, which likely carries a specific symbolic meaning.

Among this group of nude female figures, a strikingly symbolic pair of horses is prominently inserted. The horses are depicted in a standing posture, with elongated heads and necks, and slender bodies. The heads of the two horses are symmetrically curved downward, with short, extended front legs that are symmetrically bent. The lower legs are straight and slanted, connected in a symmetrical manner. The outlines are drawn with double lines. On the left side of the horse pair, a straight, slanted reproductive organ is extended, while it is absent on the right side. Both horses are painted red all over.

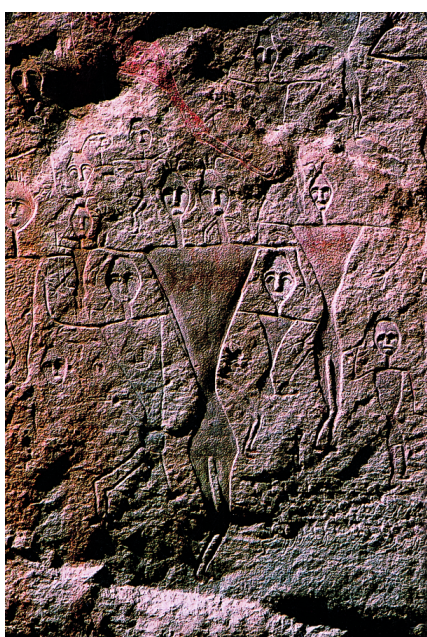


Figure 4 The Colored Drawing on the Kangjia Shimenzi Petroglyph

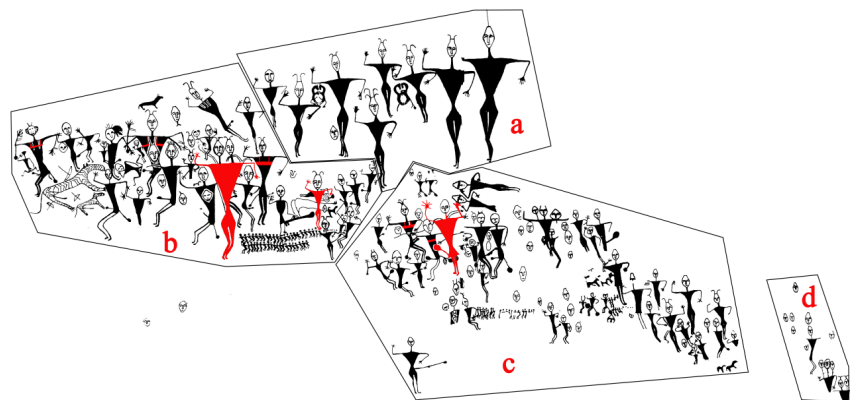


Figure 5 The Sections of Kangjia Shimenzi Petroglyph: (a) The Upper Section; (b) The Lower Left Section; (c) The Lower Central Section; (d) The Lower Right Section. (Drawn by Che Jing, Cited from Wu Xinhua, The Kangjiashimenzi Petroglyphs and the Early Queen Mother of the West. <http://news.sina.cn/2017-08-05/detail-ifiyitayr9236127.d.html?from=wap>)

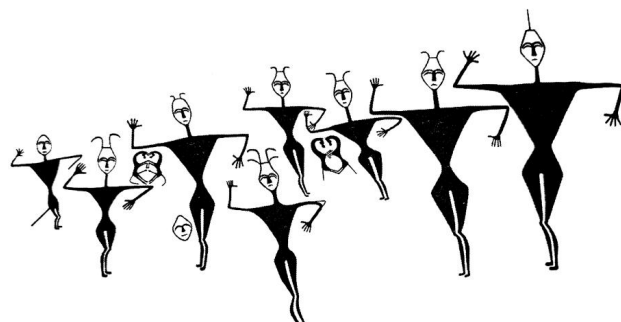


Figure 6 The Sketch of the Upper Section (Drawn by Qin Dahai)

## 4.2 The Lower Left Section

The left section is situated below and to the left of the upper section of the petroglyph (Figure 7). This section is densely concentrated with human and animal figures, intricately interwoven with little sense of orderly arrangement. It primarily consists of figures in the “Kangjiashimenzi posture” figures, individual human heads, standing tigers and horses, and two rows of “small figures” with linked arms. The animal with longer body originally depicted here was obviously overlapped by the right side of this section’s petroglyph; the later elements belongs to the overall composition of the left section.

### 4.2.1 Dancing Figures

This zone contains 25 dancing figures, sharing the same posture and style as those in the Upper Section, though with some variations in depiction. On the upper middle part, a slanting dancer is found, with both arms raised—this posture is unique to this individual. This figure is entirely painted red. Within the section, the sizes of the figures vary noticeably, and they are spaced irregularly with no arranged pattern. Many figures have clearly bent lower legs, presenting a lunge pose. Some figures wear felt hats adorned with plume feathers. Those without the linear depiction of plume feathers might be without hats, and their head are round, while most wearing felt hats have flat-topped crowns. There are also a few with flat topped hats lack plume feathers. The main variations can be summarized as follows:

#### (1) Most Figures are Males with Depicted Phalluses

Most figures are depicted with exaggerated phalluses, extending from the hips and ending in a spherical shape. The hips are rounded, differing in style from the nude female hips in section A, and closer to the stone sculpted human figures unearthed at the Gumugou Cemetery in the Kongque River area. Most stand upright, except for one slanting figure in the upper part of the picture.

#### (2) Scene of Male-Female Sexual Intercourse

There are several groups of male-female intercourse scenes in this section of the petroglyph. Group 1, located on the far right of the section, is explicitly and vividly portrayed. The male has a monkey-like face, broad ears, and is shown in right profile; his phallus has lines depicting pubic hair at its root. Under his right arm, a female figure has one arm raised and the other hanging long. Her legs are spread apart, and the male’s phallus points directly towards her vulva. Group 2, located slightly to the left in the section, shares a similar composition with Group 1, except the male has double lined feathers on his head and a broader chest. Since this picture overlaps and disrupts an intercourse scene below it, the male’s right arm is bent upward and then downward to avoid the headdress of the figure beneath. The root of the phallus is carved with linear hair patterns. Under his left arm, a female figure lies horizontally; her arms posture is the same as in Group 1, and her lower body posture is also identical. Their intercourse is depicted directly and clearly. However, on the triangular abdomen of this male figure, an

elderly male head with beard, is depicted. Based on these two groups, there is no indication that the female figures were added later; the compositions are complete and structurally coherent, suggesting they were likely created in a single execution. In the lower right corner of the section, there is another intercourse scene, generally similar to the first two groups, except it depicts two males with the same female. The female is centered, with one male shown slanting.

Elsewhere in the section, there are several groups of standing males whose exaggerated phalluses, extending from their hips, point towards nearby females. While the intended meaning is evident, these are not as explicit as the first two groups. One group, located to the right in the upper part above a row of “small figures” with linked arms includes the most exaggerated phallus in the entire picture. This male’s left hand is not stretched straight forward but is bent downward, appearing to hold his phallus, which points towards a distant standing nude female. Such kind of intercourse scenes appear to be more symbolic or suggestive in nature.

### 4.2.2 Figures’ Head Portraits

Figures’ head portraits are scattered relatively randomly throughout the scene, with no discernible pattern. Particularly, the portraits carved on the chests of “dancing figures” likely merely utilize the available space, as all the heads are adult, seemingly without implying the symbolism of “carrying a child”.

### 4.2.3 Tiger-Horse Patterns and Dancing Figures with Linked Arms are New Added Pictures

## 4.3 The Lower Central Section

The lower central section is located in the center of the lower section of the petroglyph (Figure 8). The carvings in this section are generally similar to those in the left section, with a dense concentration of human and animal figures. The individual figures are further reduced in size, and some patterns are executed simply and roughly, with unclear lines. There is a greater number of figure heads portraits, relatively concentrated or scattered throughout the scene. Compared to the previous two zones, the characteristics show some variation.

### 4.3.1 Dancing Figures

#### (1) Generally Small and Simply Depicted

This area contains 40 dancing figures. The individuals are generally smaller, and a minority are carelessly ground, with incomplete rendering of the dancers’ limbs. On the right side of the scene, the figures are predominantly male, mostly depicted with exaggerated male genitalia, the external ends of which are spherical. In the upper part of the scene, two horizontally aligned dancers are shown side by side, with thin bodies and constricted waists. On the left side of the scene, the dancers without male genitalia are likely female.



Figure 7 The Sketch of the Lower Left Section (Drawn by Qin Dahai, Designed by Che Jing)



Figure 8 The Sketch of the Lower Central Section (Drawn by Qin Dahai, Designed by Che Jing)

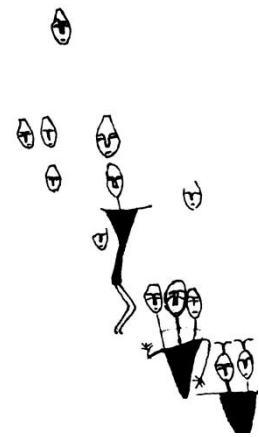


Figure 9 The Sketch of the Lower Right Section (Drawn by Qin Dahai)

## (2) Variations in Postures

For some dancers, the lower legs are no longer bent, and the technique of using a constricted waist to separate the upper chest from the rounded hips is no longer employed; the entire form resembles someone wearing a tube-style long skirt. Such dancing figures appear in the right part of this section.

### 4.3.2 Explicit Male-Female Intercourse Scenes

There are no illustrative, paired male-female intercourse scenes with a sense of movement, like those found.

### 4.3.3 Figure's Head Portraits and "Small Figures" with Linked Arms

The number of figure's head portraits increases, and their arrangement appears disorderly. In the lower left area, there are very simply and roughly depicted "small figures" with linked arms in a destruction.

## 4.4 The Lower Right Section

The Right Section is located to the right of the Central Section (Figure 9), with a one-meter interval separating it from the Left Section. The patterns within this zone are simple and crudely depicted, and the layout is even more disordered. It constitutes the lowest section of the entire petroglyph. The individual figures here are smaller, scattered, and sparse. The scene contains five dancing figures, of which only two are complete; the remaining three dancers are represented only by either their upper bodies or their lower bodies, having been pecked out. On the right side of the scene, there is a partial scene depicting a female parting her lower body, alongside which a short line represents the male phallus. None of the dancers in this section are depicted with male genitalia. The most numerous elements in this zone are figure head portraits, which are arranged in a concentrated manner in the left half of the area. Among the figures in this section, only a single dancer is depicted with double curves on the head, indicating plume feathers. This represent technique is absent in all other cases, indicating that this particular stylistic technique had essentially disappeared.

## 5. THE CHANGES IN THE PERIODS, STYLES AND CONTENTS OF THE KANGJIA SHIMENZI PETROGLYPH

### 5.1 Insights on the Groups, Sections and Stages of the Petroglyph

Mr. Wang Binghua divided the entire petroglyph into nine groups. This division was "based on the positions of the petroglyph for the convenience of description." Although he realized that this division should have a basis of the "age and content," it ultimately remained unspecified due to a lack of evidence (Wang, 2014). Wu Xinhua divided it into four sections, largely continuing the line of thought in Mr. Wang Binghua's division. Mr. Liu Cheng explicitly proposed that the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph can be divided into two stages (Liu, 2016). The first stage consists of the seven large, meticulously pecked figures with a rigorous

representational style, located at the very top of the petroglyph. The second stage comprises the more densely arranged human and animal figures below these first-stage figures. The key difference of the first and second stages is the depiction of the male phallus beginning in the second stage. Mr. Wu Xinhua divided the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph into four groups. This essentially subdivides Mr. Liu Cheng's second stage into three groups from west to east and top to bottom, that is, the scenes in the lower part of the entire petroglyph. Viewed from the overall layout of the petroglyph, this grouping is meaningful. Gaps of varying widths exist between the left, middle, and right groups. The postures of the figures also changes across the different groups. He further divided the entire petroglyph into three stages: the first stage corresponds to Liu Cheng's first stage, while the second and third stages collectively correspond to Liu Cheng's second stage. Wu Xinhua's stages make an advancement over Liu Cheng's, as it more comprehensively considers the patterns and trends in the petroglyph's layout, development, stylistic changes, and content change (Wu, 2020).

### 5.2 The Relationship of Superimposition and Alteration and the Process of Carving

#### 5.2.1 The Relationship of Superimposition and Alteration

Although Liu Cheng observed instances of superimposition and alteration between the figures and animals on the petroglyph, such occurrences between adjacent scenes are more likely to have happened within relatively close time periods (Liu, 2016). While these provide some reference for periodization, their significance is limited. In the overall composition, the figures in the Upper Zone are arranged in an orderly manner. Although staggered vertically, they do not appear scattered. Within the area extending east-west across the lower part of the Upper section, aside from the disordered layout and composition of figures and human heads in the Right Section at the eastern edge, the other sections—despite a somewhat dense concentration of figures, human head portraits, and animals, with localized overlapping, crowding, and superimposition—are largely comprised of complete figures and meaningful scenes. These elements are essentially situated on a relatively horizontal line. The whole scene shows an effect that progressing from east to west, the horizontal plane gradually descending, and the style gradually changing, culminating in a hastily concluded execution.

#### 5.2.2 Carving the Petroglyph by Lowering the Background Level

The lower section of the petroglyph is situated at a height from the ground level, with the uppermost part of the petroglyph approximately 20 meters above the ground. At the very bottom of the petroglyph, scattered red painted goats and its riders are presented, located only 1.2 to 2 meters above the surface. Large rocks on the ground are carved linear carvings of animals, including goats and deer. The petroglyph itself has a height of 9 meters. A question arises: how were these carvings created? Specifically, how were the high sections, which can only be viewed from a distance today, actually executed? Modern archaeologists, when documenting or restoring such petroglyph, often rely on ladders

over ten meters high. While some scholars have speculated that ancient peoples might have used similar wooden structures, the probability of this is exceptionally low. No comparable evidence has been found in association with prehistoric petroglyph sites anywhere in the world. Furthermore, during the excavations in the deposits at the base of the cliff also have uncovered no traces, such as wood fragments, that would indicate the use of supporting frameworks or scaffolding for such a large scale undertaking. Analyzing the overall layout and sequence of the carvings, the seven nude figures at the very top are the earliest. The scenes unfolding below from west to east generally follow a sequence: earlier in the west and later in the east, and earlier higher up and later lower down. This progression is supported by instances where adjacent figures show superimposition; for example, a figure further east overlaps one to its west, indicating the western figure was carved first, followed sequentially by figures to the east.

During multiple field observations, the author of this article always standing under the cliff and gazing upward, there is always a question: how the ancient artisans, with focused concentration and undisturbed dedication, meticulously outlined the forms and then patiently held smooth stones to grind out the exquisite figures, imbuing them with vitality. Where did they stand? Examining the topography beneath the vertical cliff face, the ground directly below the petroglyph curves inward in a concave arc, which does not appear entirely natural. Subsequent excavations confirmed that several meters of deposits of human activity lied beneath. The natural slope on either side of the central carved surface rises gradually. Following its original natural contour, the ground level directly under the cliff was originally significantly higher than it is today. Standing on this original, higher ground level, creating the uppermost scenes would not have been difficult. Scholars like Wang Aijun have proposed the same viewpoint: the ancient people did not need scaffolding or elevated platforms at all; they carved while standing on the ground at the contemporary level. They suggest that the slopes on both sides and above the initial carving surface were originally tens of meters high, perfectly positioning the creators to carve the first group of figures. Over time, as people gradually excavated and moved earth outward, the exposed rock face expanded. This allowed for the carving of the second and third groups, predominantly male figures related to reproduction worship, and eventually the entire petroglyph. Combining these observations with the research findings of Liu Cheng and Wu Xinhua, it can be inferred that the temporal sequence of the petroglyph, the earlier one higher up and the later one lower down, the earlier in the west and the later in the east, was fundamentally determined by the changing ground level available to the artists (Wang, 2006). After completing the topmost carvings, to continue downward, the ancient artisans employed a method of "reducing the background", systematically lowering the working level by excavating horizontally, which allowed them to historically complete this world-renowned petroglyph, section by successive section.

### 5.2.3 The Stages of Petroglyph

By observing the layout and section characteristics of the petroglyph, and referring to the local relationship of superimposition and alteration, the Kangjia Shimen petroglyph can be divided into different stages.

#### (1) The Stages of Petroglyph

The author of this article agrees with Liu Cheng's view that the Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph can be divided into two stages: early stage and later stage. In general, the Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph can be divided into two stages, the first phase of the first stage, that is, the seven figures on the upper part of the petroglyph, the content expressed is single and pure. In the lower part of the petroglyph in this area, the style and expression content of the petroglyph are generally the same. It can be divided into two stages. The first stage is completed in a relatively small period unit, and the second stage goes through a longer period. According to Mr. Wu Xinhua's division, Liu Cheng's second stage can be divided into 3 phrases. Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph can be divided into two stages and four phrases.

The first stage is also the first stage of Liu Cheng's opinion.

The second stage is divided into 3 phrases, which are left section, middle and right sections of the petroglyph.

#### (2) The Features of Different Stages

The characteristics of the Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph are obviously different in different periods. The characteristics of the first stage of petroglyph are also as described above. At different phrases of the second stage, the style of depiction and the content of the petroglyph also changed.

In the left section of the first stage, the content of the petroglyph is gradually enriched. The basic posture of the dance characters has not changed, but the individual has become smaller, and the portrayal is not as elaborate and refined as the first phrase. It's just that these figures are generally engraved with a phallus, and two sets of male and female mating pictures are carved, and some dancing figures are additionally carved with a phallus behind the buttocks. Human head portraits appear in the scene, and some human head portraits are engraved on the chest represented by the dance figure in a triangular shape. The scene depicts the image of a tiger horse standing still, all of which are engraved with genitals, and symbolic bows and arrows are carved around them. The picture depicts two rows of dancing "figures" with linked arms.

In the middle section of the second stage, the content of the petroglyph is basically the same as that of the first stage. The basic posture of the dance characters has not changed, but the figures have become smaller and the portrayal has become rougher. The figures on the west side of the right area are generally engraved with phallus, and the two groups of male and female intercourse pictures generally disappear, and some dancing figures are engraved with phallus behind the buttocks. The number of human head portraits in the picture increases, concentrated and scattered on the picture. The position of the picture on the east side of the right area gradually moves downward, and the posture of some dance characters has changed significantly, the lower legs bent is not obvious, and there are figures who do not have a waist or a waist that are not obvious. This group of characters basically does not engrave the male root. The picture depicts a row of dancing "figures" with linked arms, which are very sloppy, and even symbolically expressed by small dots.

The right section of the third stage is located lower, the pattern is simple, mainly human head portraits, and the dance characters are depicted in simple style, even some is incomplete.

#### 5.2.4 The Ages of Kangjia Shimenzi Petroglyph

Due to the lack of archaeological stratigraphic relationships and other coexisting artifacts, and the petroglyph themselves cannot directly explain their production ages, so the age of petroglyph has always been a bottleneck restricting the mature development of petroglyph. At present, when it is difficult to judge the specific and absolute age of a certain petroglyph, the petroglyph academic community mostly give a relative framework to the petroglyph. The main basis for relative age is to place the petroglyph in a specific age context, compare them with the relevant remains which are known ages, and carry out cultural identification and integration. The solution of the age of Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph can rely on this idea. At present, the remains closest to the cultural connotation of Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph are the Xiaohe culture of the Luobunaoer Delta cemetery.

#### (1) Kangjia Shimenzi Petroglyph and Xiaohe Cemetery

Comparing the Xiaohe Cemetery with the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph reveals that both sites feature explicit and exaggerated depictions or carvings of male and female genitalia, alongside the repetitive use of symbolic motifs such as triangles to convey their messages (2005). These elements express a profound emphasis on reproduction worship and beliefs in abundance. Additionally, the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph utilizes its two-dimensional pictorial format to directly depict scenes of sexual intercourse. In both content and form, these works exhibit strong cultural commonalities, indicating that the people associated with the Xiaohe Cemetery and the creators of the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph

shared fundamental primitive beliefs centered around reproduction worship. Beyond this, the Xiaohe Cemetery and the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph also display remarkable similarities in the following series of symbolic elements.

## (2) Exaggerated Nose Shape

Woodcarving human face portraits are often seen in Xiaohe cemetery, these portraits stand out as extremely exaggerated human noses. Human faces portraits mainly show noses, and other facial organs are only embellished; The human face portraits of Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph also highlights the nose, and the long and convex nose bridge occupies most of the human face (Figure 10).

## (3) Intersexual Stone Human Statue

An “intersexual stone human statue” was discovered near the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph site, which functioned as a “sacred object” in the ancient fertility ritual ceremonies. The deeply incised eyes and small mouth on the face of this figure resemble the facial style of the human depictions in the petroglyph. The vulva is prominently carved, characterized by a raised border surrounding a central depression, with a square convex ridge connected at the upper end, giving the overall form an oar-like appearance. Similarly, all male burials at the Xiaohe Cemetery had a wooden post carved with a vulva erected at the head of the coffin. These posts, varying in size, exhibit the same oar-like form, identical to the representation of the vulva on the “intersexual stone human statue” (Figure 11).

## (4) Red and White Painted Faces

In the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph, some figures are painted red while others are painted white. Despite millennia of exposure to the elements, traces of these red and white pigments remain clearly visible on the bodies and faces of numerous figures, indicating that the petroglyph were originally a vibrant polychrome artwork. Similarly, at the Xiaohe Cemetery, many mummies are exceptionally well-preserved. A widespread practice is observed in burials from the first to the third layers: the deceased’s faces and bodies were generally coated with a milky-white paste-like substance, beneath which a layer of red pigment was applied. In contrast, the faces of the deceased from the fourth and fifth layers and the northern sector were often painted red, with

some showing painted red lines. Furthermore, wooden human masks, commonly found at the Xiaohe Cemetery, also have their faces painted red (Figure 12).

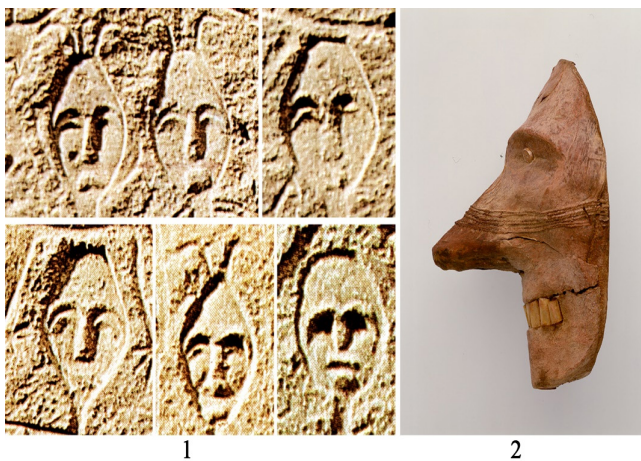
## (5) The Shape of Hats

Mr. Wang Binghua initially identified the hats worn by figures in the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph as the tall, pointed hats of scythians, considering this a key evidence for attributing the petroglyph to the scythians. However, current analysis suggests that these are not scythians’ hats, but rather a type of cylindrical hat with a flat, rounded top (Figure 13).

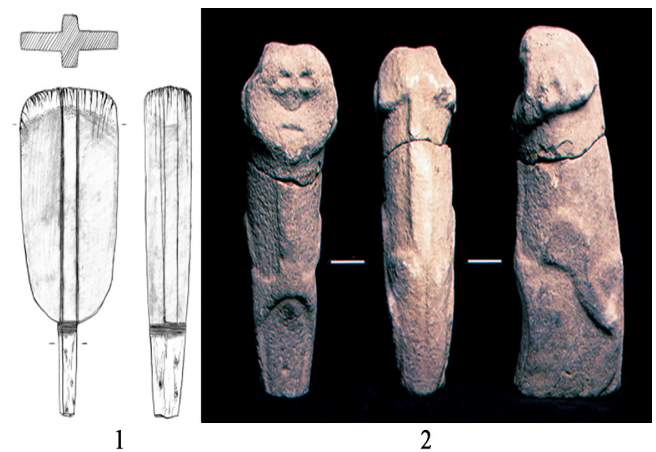
## (6) The Ornaments on the Hats

The ornaments on the hats of the figures in the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph are typically depicted with fine parallel lines extending upward from the crown, curving outward at the tips. There are also instances where three, four, or multiple such lines are used to represent the ornaments. Scholars have generally agreed that these lines represent plume feathers. Similarly, the tall pointed hats worn by the Xiaohe people were also consistently adorned with plume feathers, which varied by gender: men’s hats featured a row of feathers, while women’s hats were adorned with a single central feather (Figure 14).

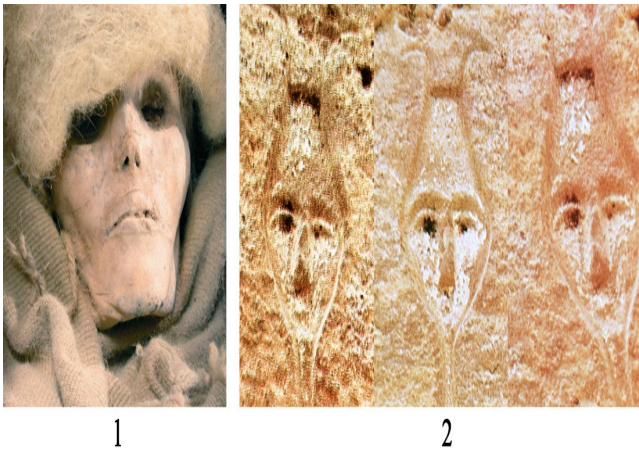
The petroglyph and cemeteries are fundamentally different. A cemetery encompasses its location, surrounding environment, layout, usage process, burial structure types and relationships, mortuary practices, funerary objects, and specific ritual cultural elements—none of which can be directly compared to the found in the two-dimensional petroglyph. Despite these inherent differences, we have still identified numerous shared or similar cultural elements between the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph and the Xiaohe Culture. The presence of these similarities indicates that although the Xiaohe Cemetery and the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph represent different types of sites, they are vestiges left by populations existing during the same broad age, who shared identical religious beliefs and consistent artistic expressions in specific domains. While the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph themselves bear no ages, the chronology of the Xiaohe Culture has been unequivocally established through archaeology, particularly by applying scientific dating methods. Based on the fundamental characteristics of the Xiaohe Culture and referencing radiocarbon dating results, the currently discovered Xiaohe



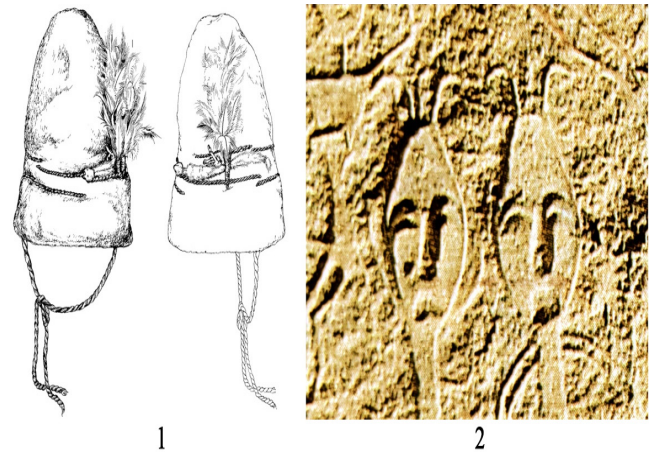
**Figure 10** The Petroglyph and the Human Face Portraits form the Unearthed Cultural Relics: (1) Kangjia Shimenzi Petroglyph (Cited from the Third National Survey of Cultural Relics in Xinjiang, Changji Volume, Beijing: China Science Publishing & Media Ltd., 2011 edition, p. 172); (2) The Woodcarving Figure’s Face of the Xiaohe Cemetery (Cited from the Third National Survey of Cultural Relics in Xinjiang, Bazhou Volume, Beijing: China Science Publishing & Media Ltd., 2011 edition, p. 165).



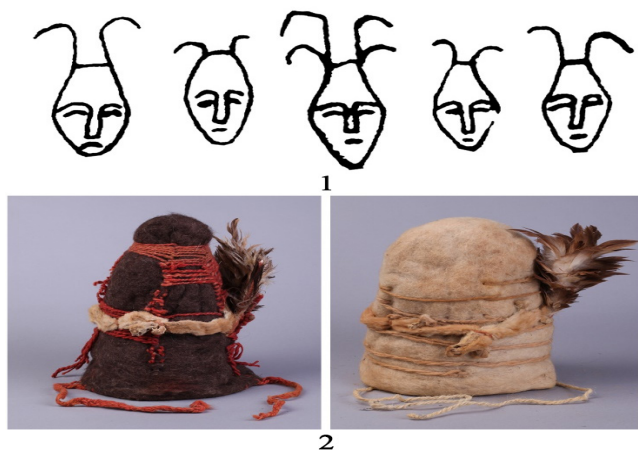
**Figure 11** The Reproduction Worship Figures from the Unearthed Cultural Relics and the Petroglyph: (1) The Wooden Post Carved with a Vulva of Xiaohe Cemetery (Cited from the Xinjiang Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology: “Report on the 2003 Excavation of Xiaohe Cemetery in Lop Nur”, *Cultural Relics*, No. 10, 2007 edition, Figure 4); (2) The Intersexual Stone Human Statue of Kangjia Shimenzi Petroglyph (Cited from the Changji Museum in Xinjiang).



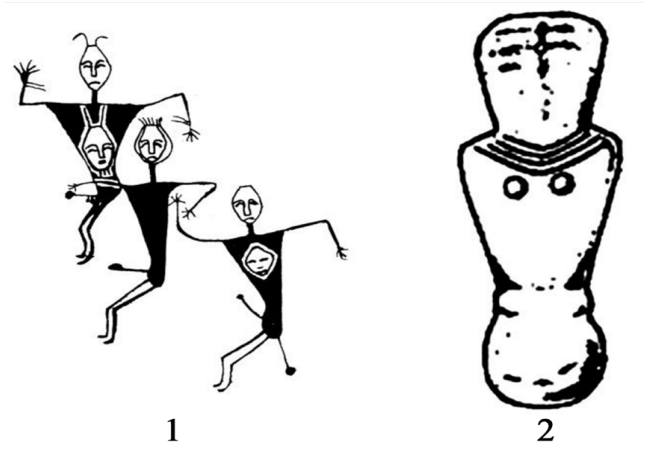
**Figure 12** The Paintings from the Ancient Corpse and the Petroglyph: (1) The White-Painted Faces of Xiaohe Cemetery (Cited from the Third National Survey of Cultural Relics in Xinjiang, Bazhou Volume, Beijing: China Science Publishing & Media Ltd., 2011 edition, p. 164); (2) The White-Painted Faces of Kangjia Shimenzi Petroglyph (Cited from the Third National Survey of Cultural Relics in Xinjiang, Changji Volume, Beijing: China Science Publishing & Media Ltd., 2011 edition, p. 173).



**Figure 13** The Comparison of the Hats of Xiaohe People and Figures of the Petroglyph: (1) The Hat and Ornaments of People in Xiaohe (Cited from the Xinjiang Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology: "Report on the 2003 Excavation of Xiaohe Cemetery in Lop Nur", *Cultural Relics*, No. 10, 2007 edition, Figure 5 (1)); (2) The Hat of Figures of Kangjia Shimenzi Petroglyph (Cited from the Third National Survey of Cultural Relics in Xinjiang, Changji Volume, Beijing: China Science Publishing & Media Ltd., 2011 edition, p. 173).



**Figure 14** The Comparison of the Hats and Ornaments of Xiaohe People and Figures of the Petroglyph: (1) The Ornaments of Hats of Kangjia Shimenzi Petroglyph (Drawn by Qin Dahai); (2) The Ornaments of Hats of Xiaohe Cemetery (Cited from the Xinjiang Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology: "Report on the 2003 Excavation of Xiaohe Cemetery in Lop Nur", *Cultural Relics*, No. 10, 2007 edition, Figure 24).



**Figure 15** The Comparison of the Style of the Figures from the Kangjiashimenzi Petroglyph and Xiaohe Culture: (1) The Style of Figures of Kangjiashimenzi Petroglyph (Drawn by Qin Dahai); (2) The Stone Carving Statue of Gumugou Cemetery of Kongque River (Cited from Wang Binghua, *Gumugou Cemetery*, Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 2014 edition, p. 83, Figure 63).

cultural remains are dated to a time frame beginning around 2200 BCE and ending around 1400 BCE, or possibly slightly later (Li, 2007).

### 5.3 The Caving style of the Upper Body of the Dance Figures is Similar to that Stone Carving Figures in Gumugou Cemetery of Kongque River

In the stylistic depiction of the dancing figures from stage 2, phrase 1 of the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph, a relatively noticeable change compared to phase 1 is the appearance of more rounded hip forms, while other postural conventions remain unchanged. This style is unique to this single phrase, suggesting it bears a clear chronological marker. The absolute age for Phase 2, Stage 1 can be referenced against the ages established for the burial sites at the Gumugou Cemetery in the Kongque River region (Figure 15).

The Gumugou Cemetery in the Kongque River region is a significant site of the Xiaohe Culture, with an overall age upper limit earlier than that of the Xiaohe Cemetery itself. Seven radiocarbon dates have been obtained from the Gumugou Cemetery (Table 1). These carbon-14 dates were calculated using the 5730-year half-life and were subsequently calibrated using the Damon calibration table. For the Type one burials at Gumugou—characterized as shaft pit graves without surface encircling wooden posts—seven radiocarbon dates are available. Mr. Wang Binghua proposed that these dates around 3800 years Before Present. Examining the numerical data, the upper limits of the calibrated ages ranges generally fall between 2100 BCE and 1900 BCE, while the lower limits concentrate between 1700 BCE and 1600 BCE. Consequently, the most probable time frame for the Type one burials at the Gumugou Cemetery is estimated to be from 2100 BCE to 1700 BCE. However, two other dates exist. One, sample ZK-1003 (2), gave a date of 358 BCE to 2 BCE, which is considered anomalously earlier and therefore unreliable. Another

**Table 1** Carbon-14 Dating Results of the Gumugou Cemetery and Tieban River Site

The Numbers of the Laboratory	The Units of Unearthing	The Objects of Dating	Carbon Dating (BP)		The Age After the Tree-Ring Chronologies Adjustments (BCE)
BK81042	M38	shroud blanket	3485±100	3390±100	1875-1530
BK81043	M38	sheepskin on the coffin	3615±170	3510±170	2123-1640
BK81044	M38	coffin	366±80	3560±80	2032-1777
BK81045	M4	coffin	3525± 70	3430±70	1878-1677
WB81-82	M12	coffin	4260±80	4140±80	2886-2587
ZK-1003(1)	M23	coffin	3650±60	3550±60	2011-1782
ZK-1003(2)	M23	shroud	2185±105	2120±105	358-2

sample, WB81-82, provided a calibrated range of 2886 BCE to 2587 BCE after several calibration attempts, which is regarded as obviously younger. Based on the consistent group of the other reliable dates, the period of the Gumugou Cemetery can be inferred to be approximately 2100 BCE to 1600 BCE. Accordingly, the upper chronological limit for phase 1, stage 1 of the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph can be inferred to be around 2100 BCE.

#### 5.4 The Postures of The Dancing Figures of Kangjiashimenzi Petroglyph

The postures of the dancing figures in the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph are highly standardized. Their arms extend horizontally to the sides, with the forearms bent—one hand raised upward and the other lowered downward. This specific posture is considered a physical representation of the symbol “𠂇”, suggesting that the creators of the Kangjiashimenzi Petroglyph were performing a “𠂇” dance. The renowned Chinese scholar Rao Zongyi published several essays discussing the origins and distribution of the symbol “𠂇” found within China. Combining evidence of the symbol “𠂇” from both China and the surrounding regions of Xinjiang, he concluded that it was primarily prevalent from the Late Neolithic to the Bronze Age.

##### (1) The Late Neolithic Period in China

A pottery vessel decorated with a symbol “𠂇” was unearthed from the Xiaohayan cultural cemetery at the northwest of Chifeng City, Inner Mongolia. Radiocarbon dating places its absolute age around 3000 BCE. In the Gansu-Qinghai region, the earliest known symbol “𠂇” appears on the base of a pottery basin with a short lines from the Zongri site of the Majiayao Culture. The Yangshan cemetery in Minhe County, Qinghai, associated with the Banshan type of the Majiayao Culture, dates to 2655-2330 BCE. The symbol became notably prevalent during the Machang type of the Majiayao Culture. The most concentrated finds of painted pottery with symbol “𠂇” come from the Liuwan cemetery in Ledu, Qinghai, dating to 2300-2000 BCE.

##### (2) Shang and Zhou Dynasties in China

At the Erlitou site in Yanshi, Henan (1900-1600 BCE), a variant of the symbol “𠂇” appears on the belly of a pottery Ding (Song, 2006). A pottery shard from Shang Dynasty site in the Jian villiage, Laishui County, Hebei, bears a simplified symbol “𠂇” with short outward-bent lines, somewhat resembling simplified symbol “𠂇” on the pottery of the Samarra culture in Mesopotamia. A simplified, curved symbol “𠂇” is incised on the base of a sandy red pottery jar from the Zhengzhou Shangcheng site, dating to the Erligang period. Scholar Rao Zongyi identified symbols “𠂇” on oracle bones from the reign of King Wuding. Qiu Xigui interpreted the character as “wan” (character “wan” in Chinese), indicating performers of ritual music and dance, and associated the “Wan Dance” with traditional Shang ceremonial performances. The symbol continued into the Western Zhou, Warring States, and even Western Han periods, sometimes rendered in a rotated form (Rao, 2000). Examples can be found on a Western Zhou

bronze bell with a symbol “𠂇” and a Zishuheichen Fugai vessel with a symbol “𠂇”, as well as a Warring States-period dagger-axe with “𠂇” from Zaozhuang, Shandong. A small square pot with a bent form “𠂇” from Spring and Autumn period Jin cemetery and a painted bean plate from a Chu tomb at Jiangling also feature the symbol “𠂇” (Rao, 2000). At the Lanqiao site in Xihe County, Gansu, the Siwa Culture painted simplified or variant symbol “𠂇” on the handles of double-saddle-shaped pottery vessels, with the cemetery dated between the Shang and Zhou periods (Zhao, 1987).

##### (3) The Northern Steppe of Central Asia

From the late 3rd to early 2nd millennium BCE, on the typical pot-shaped vessels of the Andronovo Culture, symbol “𠂇” or their variants often can be seen. petroglyph in the Altai Mountains depict pairs of human figures dancing opposite each other. One scene shows two figures with short legs, one single-legged on the right and the other double-legged on the left, bending toward each other in a dance posture. Their arms are bent at right angles—one raised, one lowered—with bulbous heads and mushroom-shaped fists. Exaggerated male genitalia point toward each other, meeting at a spherical form. The right figure appears fatter and has a short tail ornaments. Another stone shows a similar pair in an upright statue, both wearing headdresses, with the left figure having two legs and a tail. Near Duolate Village, Hongdun Town, Altay City, a shallow rock shelter known as Balyeenbasitao Cave on the southern foothills of the Altai contains painted images, though heavily damaged by others. Visible motifs include wild cattle, ibex, wolves, and human figures. The designs were first pecked into the rock and then painted red. Among them, a pair of dancing figures matches the posture and structure of the Altai petroglyph: circular heads, one arm raised and the other lowered, legs bent forward, and the pair showed their prominently depicted male genitalia.

The early symbol “𠂇” was prevalent across the Central Plains, northwestern China, and the northern plain of Central Asia, primarily during the Late Neolithic to the Bronze Age. For a detailed discussion on the origins and spread of the symbol “𠂇”, please refer to the article “The Initial Transmission and Original Meaning of the Symbol ‘𠂇’” (Liu, 2018).

##### (4) The Ages of the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph

Considering the shared cultural elements and artistic expressions among the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph, the Xiaohayan Cemetery, and the Gumugou Cemetery, and the appearance and prevalence of the symbol “𠂇” across northern China, the northwest, and the Central Asian steppe, we can situate Kangjiashimenzi within a broader context. This analysis suggests that the initial creation of these renowned petroglyph likely began no later than the end of the 3rd millennium BCE, possibly earlier, and the lower limit of the age of the main scene is approximately the mid-2nd century BCE, while some of the animal petroglyphs in the peripheral area of the main scene date back to the late 2nd millennium BCE.

## 6. THE SACRIFICE OF SHIMEN

After prehistoric humans developed the concept of deities, they gradually formed a distinction between the divine world and the mortal world. Primitive people began to attribute the miraculous places on the earth to the divinity. Most sites—from Paleolithic cave paintings and Neolithic petroglyph and altars to various religious establishments, including temples—were built in these miraculous places. Here, the natural environment and human-made structures merged into one, deeply imbued with the ancient people's views of the cosmos, life and death, and the soul. When ancient humans conducted sacred rituals in such divine and mystical settings, they experienced extraordinary physical and mental sensations. In these sacred realms, our ancestors performed various ceremonies, including dance, hoping to achieve communication with deities. So as to pray for their life, and hope can confront death, ward off disasters, and expel evil influences. All these religious ritual activities can be summarized as forms of sacrifice offered to various immortals.

### 6.1 Sacrifice

The forms, processes, and outcomes of sacrifice constituted the core content of prehistoric culture. Early primitive humans, believing in the existence of supernatural forces, sought to connect with matters and objects possessing supernatural forces and appease these forces—the deities they believed in. The most fundamental method to curry favor with the supernatural was to offer what they themselves valued. As deities grew increasingly grand and remote from humanity, delivering gifts directly to them became a difficult task. Specific rituals will be carried out, and people believed that through these ceremonies, they could make contact with the deities and subsequently present their offerings. This entire process is what defines sacrifice. Items offered as sacrifices could include virtually anything created by humans, with “food” being the most ubiquitous. From prehistoric times through the historical era and even to the modern day, the common practice is colloquially called “offering sacrifices”, which can also called “contracts” (i.e., making wishes).

As human sacrificial practices grew more complex, they became stratified, conducted in different settings, with the highest level being state ceremonies, and so forth. The ritual vessels used in important sacrifices for deities were not ordinary mundane objects but sanctified items. Historically, sacrifice evolved from general offerings of objects and food to include rituals involving the slaughter of living creatures. Human sacrifice might have initially involved offering captured enemies to ancestral deities, later evolving into human sacrifice with broader symbolic meaning. Such offerings of living beings are termed “sacrifices”. The most common subjects of human sacrifice were women, with the sacrifice of young girls being particularly prevalent. The sacrifice of girls was related to sexuality. Sexual activity was among the earliest human activities to be sanctified. Offering a girl as a sacrifice to the deities was, in essence, the earliest form of sexual bribery. The phenomenon of the “right of the girl's first night” was widespread in human history; initially, this right was offered to the deities, often with wizards acting as the executors. This custom remained highly prevalent throughout historical periods, glimpses of which can be seen in documented records such as those about Ximen Bao governing Ye City.

### 6.2 The Sacrifice of Shimen

Kangjiashimenzi is located in the deep mountain valleys of Danxia mountains. The valley floor forms a rough triangle that winds its way outward. Standing at the summit, one can experience winds gathering and clouds drifting, rain falling in the east while colorful clouds glow in the west, and rainbows appearing intermittently amidst it all—a scene of natural grandeur both elusive and magnificent. Being in such an environment feels like being in a celestial realm, deepening one's understanding of the traditional Chinese phrase “clouds and rain over Mount Wu” used to metaphorically describe intimate relations between men and women.

#### 6.2.1 A Natural Landscape imbued with Sexual Divine Power

The stone gate of Kangjiashimenzi stands facing south, and erects in a divine world. The southern mountain ranges bask in sunlight, reflecting and interacting with the Danxia landscape. Before the stone gate lies a shallow gully with a stream that flows gently year-round. Its course weaves in and out of lush grass, sometimes visible, sometimes hidden. The towering cliffs seem to reach the sky, with rows of pillar-like stone columns, the protruding stream gullies, and the shallow flows hidden in the grass together form a divine valley perceived as possessing boundless sexual power.

#### 6.2.2 The Intersexual Carving Stone

In October 2005, when the Xinjiang Cultural Relics Bureau organized experts to classify artifacts at the Hutubi County Cultural Relics Administration Office, the curator Zhang Fengzhu (a local practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine) introduced a recently collected “intersexual stone figure.” He explained that this stone figure was discovered in 2001 by local herders while excavating earth near the Kangla'erhan area, close to the Hutubi petroglyph site, and was collected by the museum in 2002. While examining this “intersexual stone carving,” I was unexpectedly struck by the strong resemblance between the artistic representation of the vulva and the vulva posts erected before male burials at the Xiaohe Cemetery. This discovery excited me immensely. I obtained photographs of the intersexual stone carving and, using this as a clue, conducted repeated analysis after returning home, eventually publishing an article “The Age, Creators, and Other Aspects of the Hutubi Petroglyph” (Liu, 2006). This unexpected find marked a crucial step towards deciphering the true significance of the Kangjiashimenzi petroglyph.

The intersexual stone carving is made from a slightly flattened, columnar stone of bluish-grey hue. The upper section had broken off but fits back together, leaving the form complete. The entire piece was shaped using carving and grinding techniques to depict a vulva, a phallus, a human face, and a semi-squatting lower body on the four sides of the stone column. The phallus and vulva are the primary subjects, symmetrically carved on the two broader faces of the stone. The human face and the vulva are located on the same side of the column. The face is carved at the top; its features are simple and compact within a concave surface, with a high forehead, small and deep round eye sockets set close together, a slightly curved triangular jaw, a small mouth, and small round ears carved on both sides. Below this, the entire surface is carved and ground to create the vulva. The vulva overall takes an “oar-shaped” form: the “oar blade” symbolizes the vaginal opening, and the “oar shaft” represents the womb. The upper end of the “oar blade” is rounded, resembling a winnowing basket, with a raised rim and a concave central area. A small round pit is located slightly below the center of this area, surrounded by a densely pecked field of dots, creating a vivid representation of the vulva. On the reverse side of the stone column, the upper section is carved with the phallus. Opposite where the face is on the other side, the glans is depicted through carving and grinding, (presenting a dome-shaped, spherical form) with a shallow groove carved on the top surface, representing the “glans.” Below this, a raised ridge runs along the center of the cylindrical shaft, representing the penis. Beneath the phallus, opposite the vulva on the front, a human buttocks is depicted in low-relief, slightly protruding with a shallow groove carved down the middle. On the two narrow sides of the stone column, slender, symbolic legs are symmetrically carved in bass-relief. The legs are bent in a semi-squatting posture. Together with the buttocks on the lower part of the reverse side and the vulva on the front, they form a three-dimensional sculpture in the round, representing the lower torso of a woman in a semi-squatting position (implying the act of giving birth). The intersexual stone carving measures 61.5 cm in height and 18.5 cm in width.

#### 6.2.3 The Sacrifice of Shimen

The first phase of Kangjia Shimenzi petroglyph was created around the second half of the 3rd millennium BCE, a group of people with a strong sex worship culture, that is, one of the traditional people of Xiaohe culture, collectively reached the bottom of Shimenzi Valley with sexual divine power. They found flat petroglyph in the lower part of the towering columnar stone wall symbolizing the phallic wall, which may be related to the female genitality. The seven naked women in the first

phase should be an important activity in the process of sacrificing to the sacred mountain valley, and the naked women dedicated to the sacred mountain should be the sacrifice of the girl. At the beginning of the second period, the walls are full of men sticking out exaggerated phallic roots, and there are figurative pictures of male and female intercourse, which is an artistic reproduction of sexual sacrifice. Due to the sacredness of the sacred mountain, these pictures of male and female intercourse are not just repetitions of common people in daily life. Although it is conceivable that the entire social sacrifice process actually occurred with male and female intercourse, it must also be infused with the sacred nature of sexual sacrifice. The fixed postures of the dancers, horses, tiger horses, bows and arrows, etc. in the petroglyph are all sexual symbols of divine power, and the dancing "small figures" with linked arms reveal that in the process of sexual sacrifice, the crowd surrounds the powerful pillars, such as intersexual stone carvings, and perform sexual dances, forming a passionate scene of the harmony between heaven and earth. In short, the sacrifice of Shimen is a kind of sexual sacrifice.

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