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REVIEW ARTICLE

GRAPHICAL INTERPRETATION OF XINJIANG ROCK ART*

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ABSTRACT

The schema mode and expressions of Xinjiang rock art highlight the characteristics of nomadic culture. The primitive aesthetics awareness reflects primitive cultural form, as the underlying purpose of primitive culture is to meet the survival needs of human beings, thus building an aesthetic cognition and consciousness that is in line with the subject consciousness. The formal beauty of rock arts first serves as an enhancing method to create meaning in "the integration of Wu Shaman and Arts" before being an expression form to please human beings. When appreciating the form of rock arts, the people in primitive society were motivated and satisfied through the communication between human beings and objects, and the interaction between human beings and gods, while gaining emotional pleasure and excitement. Rock art is a motivated and conscious way of life for primitive nomads. It is a purposeful and conscious creation of order, reflecting their instinctive and natural life desire and power.

KEYWORDS

Xinjiang Rock Art, Primitive Aesthetics, Formal Beauty

1. INTRODUCTION

The birth, evolution and the characteristics of its expression form of primitive art depend on the social pattern and the mind of concept at given historical period, thus forming the aesthetic cognition corresponding to the historical era. The desires to "live" and "survive" are the core purpose of primitive social ideology. Based on such simple meaning, aesthetic consciousness builds corresponding aesthetic objectives and principles.

Early humans, faced with an extremely severe and dangerous natural environment, were desperately in need of the power to overcome external threats to acquire adequate food for the survival and reproduction of themselves and the community. When humans could neither understand nature nor cope with the natural environment, instinct and imagination were the only method for them to relate objective beings to their survival needs as an animist explanation for natural threats and their fears of nature. In the worship world where reality interweaves with imagination, the process of worshiping realized primitives' spiritual satisfaction which is necessity for their survival, and the primitives were also inspired and solaced by life. Human beings in early history initiatively created and changed the primitive culture. Primitive people had been identifying and confirming the relationship between the self-subject and the object, trying to create different ways to make nature serve humans or strengthen their capability.

Driven by subjective will, primitives created "gods" to revere, worship,

and connect. As they regarded natural objects as divine beings, primitive people added subjective imagination to their memory when narrating natural beings and phenomena to construct images and shapes that met their survival aspirations in an exaggerated and restructuring manner. The inspiration for rock art came from real life, but it also reflects human subjective consciousness and spiritual aspirations. Therefore, rock art is both representational realism and symbolic, assuming the narrative function of recording and expressing the real life and spiritual feelings of primitives.

2. THE BIRTH OF PRIMITIVE AESTHETIC

During the savagery period, the perception of the relationship between nature and human beings was chaotic and intricate. People at that time believed that human beings were only a tiny part of the natural environment where they coexisted with plants, animals and other natural phenomena. This coexistence originated from a mystical spiritual power. On the one hand, human beings constantly obtained physical materials from nature with rudimentary production methods to ensure the survival and reproduction of individuals and tribes. On the other hand, the unpredictability and uncertainty of nature also cause people to fear and awe. Due to limited cognition and control power, the primitive nomads were unable to explain the natural forces. Instead, they were convinced that everything was mysterious, and this mysterious power dominated the life, death, and reproduction of all creatures. "Animism" is the earliest methodology that humans used to learn about the constitutive other and the outside world. To satisfy the strong

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desire of staying alive, they closely concerned about all environmental factors that were related to their own survival and examined their relationship with each other from a mystical perspective. Such kinds of thinking and cognitive mechanisms are the result of a specific historical period, greatly influencing the formation of primitive aesthetics and aesthetic concepts based on which the expressions and manifestations of primitive art formed.

The primitive thinking restrained the creative concept and expression of rock art, so the schema of petroglyph was unique under the constraints of the environment and shared the essential commonality of the spirit of life. Xinjiang petroglyphs were created by primitive nomads who hunted and reared animals as the major object of production. It was natural that primitive nomads focused on animals and tried their best to portray and represent animals in a self-knowing way. When visualizing and transforming these images, primitive artists enjoyed the process of exaggerating, embellishing, and regulating the explicit forms of animals as a way to emphasize the sacredness and symbolism of animals. Humans gained their initial cognition of beauty from the individuals' and communities' instinctive demand for survival and continuity, which was practical and utilitarian. The sense of beauty is a product of human social practice, a unique spiritual activity that satisfies the subjective feelings, desires, and particular needs of human beings in their survival. The subjective awareness transcends animal instincts and reflects the self-known and self-aware agency of human beings. Aesthetic psychology is the creative emotional activity and emotional experience generated by social practice experience and cognitive accumulation, including figurative and psychological perceptions, and the organic fusion of emotions and associations. Such emotional activity brings physiological and psychological pleasure and comfort to humans.

In the constant repetition and imitation of objects, primitive people gradually mastered some aesthetic rules of form and methods of expression, enabling people to incorporate more subjective emotional factors into petroglyph. These artists in early history shaped and transformed petroglyph images by applying pleasing and most satisfying features (such as symmetry, exaggeration, order, contrast) or modeling elements (dot, line, surface) learned through their observation of nature and material production. These elements create spiritualized, aesthetic sacred objects, such as extending and stretching arcs that depict the horns of goats and antelopes gracefully and spiritually. Several circles of the spiral line illustrated the horns of the argali to create a mystical atmosphere. Antlers are either in regular wavy lines or comb teeth, and some are even portrayed in a symmetrical branch-like shape, decorating the deer with rich rhythms and rhymes to enhance its divine characteristics.

Primitive aesthetics was gradually formed due to the combined factors of real life demands, spiritual beliefs, and utilitarian purposes. These topics were migrated to the shapes and images. In primitive cognition, the programmatic, exaggerated, deformed, symmetrical, and other aesthetic forms would enhance the "force" or "potency" of petroglyph while decorating rock paintings with aesthetic properties. The formalized images not only satisfied primitive people's spiritual aspirations but also provided them with a pleasant experience. People subjectively created more forms or symbolic content of natural objects and shaped these expressions according to their utilitarian needs into ideal forms. Given the process, primitive aesthetics first served as an approach of value adding and meaning creation, before pleasing people with beauty through its art expression.

Figure 1 shows the Gokhola Petroglyphs in Hutubi County, Changji. The petroglyph consisted of chiseling and grinding, with interwoven shape of lines and planes. There are four horse riders, one archer, two horses, two sheep, and one deer in the petroglyph. The dominant figure of the petroglyph can be identified through the size ratio of different images: the two sheep are the largest, while other images are less important, and the riders and archer are the smallest. All of them are marching forward in the same direction. Lines and planes are used to shape the two massive sheep. One sheep's body consists of smooth lines while its head is filled with planes ground by rock, illustrating the graceful curves of the sheep's horns and body. The main features of the sheep are highlighted by simple lines. The other sheep is shaped in silhouette with the horns and legs outlined by lines, and the horns curl in an exaggerated way.



Figure 1: Gokhola petroglyph in Hutubi County, Changji (Photo credit: Self-drawn)

The combination of flat lines and planes on a surface depicted the sheep with changing black-and-white colors and virtual and real patterns. The shape of a sheep has diverse patterns and decorative functions. Their exaggerated body and formalized shapes indicate that these are symbols of divine power, more than quarry being hunted or domestic livestock. According to the chisel carving marks, the painter first chiseled dots to draw the lines that formed a horse in a silhouette shape, then ground the a plane to fill the shape, thus highlighting the sturdy body of the horse. The four figures on horseback hold weapons in different postures. The figures of horse riders and the archer are simple and thin, painted with lines outlining their movements. According to their movements, hunters are marching forward ambitiously either for an expedition or for a group hunt, followed by two sacred sheep dominating their actions. Therefore, this petroglyph depicts the theme of "abundance, victory, and harvest," meaning that the primitive nomads expected a victorious expedition or hunt as they were blessed by the powerful gods. Through their interactions with divine power, humans grew stronger, more skilled, and braver. Sheep worship originated from the production and lifestyle of nomadic society. People in early history transformed, exaggerated, and beautified objective beings with their subjective will to make divine incarnations, symbolizing power and fruitfulness, while the aesthetic form served as a means to enhance the divinity.

Human beings are devoted to reproduction, so the subjective motivation of primitive aesthetics was also manifested through its practicality and utilitarianism. Some objects that reflected the subjective will (will for life) became the externalized symbols of aesthetic psychology and behavior. Early human beings had perfect and fine episodic memory and associative power, despite their low cognitive and thinking abilities. Under the guidance of pre-logical and interpenetrating thinking, they dismantled and reconstructed the beautiful and spiritual objects stored in their memory with fantasy and imagination before wholeheartedly engaging all the good intentions through empathy to create new images that reflect their own desires. The primitive aesthetic that was evolved from the satisfaction of animal pleasure of "food" and "sex" inspires people to discover, cognize, and create the world in pursuit of vitality and the self-transcendence of life spirit. Through the accumulation of experience gained from production, people established aesthetic standards for the utilitarian purpose of survival and gradually formed a collective aesthetic paradigm that met the criterion of long-term practice. Aesthetic practical experience laid a solid foundation for primitive aesthetic consciousness, concepts, and logic.

Xinjiang petroglyph is the external form of the recognition and thinking of primitive nomads. Though without strong self-awareness, primitive nomads attempted to communicate with animistic spirituality through rock art. Objects related to their own survival were carved out through intuitive memory and associated primitives' feelings of the external world, expecting to interpenetrate and communicate with all things in the world. Given such consciousness and intention, the primitive nomadic tribes persisted in rock art for the purpose of content possession, which is the original purpose of primitive art. The evolution from content possession to form re-creating not only is a process through which early human awakened their subjective and self-existence consciousness, but also reflects the development progress of primitive aesthetic consciousness. Human aesthetic activities evolved

from seeking biological instinctive pleasure to creating social culture, serving as the major content of primitive culture, ideology, social ethics, and spiritual beliefs.

3. EXPRESSION CHARACTERISTICS OF ROCK ART FORMATION

Rock art is a narrative instrument that captures reality and conveys a reverence mindset, but it is also an externalized expression of artistic cognition and awareness. The stylistic and schematic characteristics of rock art reflect the aesthetic psychology of early humans who created images. Primitive nomads who coexisted with wild animals naively explored and viewed nature. In their minds, a lot of objects and phenomena that are beyond their comprehension are regarded as mysteries. Primitive folks revered nature because they believed that those supernatural forces would control their survivals. In the meantime, primitive people's experience and perception of beauty were subtly impacted by the mystical powers and life forms that gave rise to them as well as the natural beauty of forms, which encouraged the development of aesthetic psychology. The long-term materialized work that allowed mankind to merge with nature brought pleasure and satisfaction, according to aesthetic psychology. Early man imitated and duplicated the texture, color, and shape of natural items when crafting tools, hunting, and feeding livestock. This practice developed their cognitive and expressive talents of various aesthetic forms. On the basis of collective subconscious and communal heritage, aesthetic laws and forms that are consistent with their own living environment and culture have also developed. The aesthetic perception of the natural world and the beautiful performance of life and labor, united with the primitive worshipping culture, gave rise to the primitive aesthetic consciousness.

The primitive aesthetic psychology and its cultural expressions have a correspondent and isomorphic relationship. To put it another way, the cultural forms produced by the primitive cognitive consciousness and way of thinking, which all developed out of the requirement of meeting the physical and psychological needs of humans, invariably correspond to the primordial aesthetic forms. Primitive artists incorporated their subjective emotions in imaginations onto items as a result of "animism" and "Wu Shaman (巫)" influences. They further molded and processed these items to create a unique and heavenly emblem, turning their mental thoughts into tangible things that may be seen. The process used to create and express rock art dictates the shape, content, and result of the artwork as well as how it would be used in Wu rituals and worship. The elements of all plastics are "dot, line, and plane," with the basic function of "connecting dots into lines and moving lines into planes" as their foundation. Not only are dots, lines, and planes representations of actual item forms, but they are also distinctive styles with unique meanings, mutable shapes, and different focal points.

3.1 The Structure Semantics of the Dot

Dots are the foundation of modeling; they establish a feeling of visual unity, focus, and precision. Dot has been a crucial component in picture modeling. The most typical method of creating petroglyphs is chiseling. People continuously chiseled down different forms of dots on the surface of the rock, connected chiseled dots into lines, or assembled dots into surfaces, and made diverse pictures using primitive, blunt instruments made of stone or metal. Depending on their spatial placement and proportion, the dots have different sizes and shapes. The various functions and meanings that dots serve in the painting demonstrate the painter's intention and self-awareness. Petroglyphs use a variety of dot forms to convey different messages and meanings. Due of their resemblance to certain items, such as the female vulva, the sun, the moon, and fruits, individual dots that are shaped like circles or triangles are used as comparable symbols or as emblems (Figures 2 and 3). While some dots are organized traces of identical size, others are random marks made by chisel tools. While some dots are dispersed at random, others appear to have been organized with a specific purpose in mind. Contrasts between reality and virtuality, primary, distance, and order strengthen the expression of rock art. It is clear that the petroglyph's creator deliberately and judiciously employed the expression of dots to paint various subjects and convey his or her intended message.

The use of dots in petroglyphs enhances the spatial representation of the image and gives the petroglyphs symbolic meaning. The most representative and inclusive symbolic sign is the dot, which is flat and static and cohesive, focused, and free to open and close, symbolizing

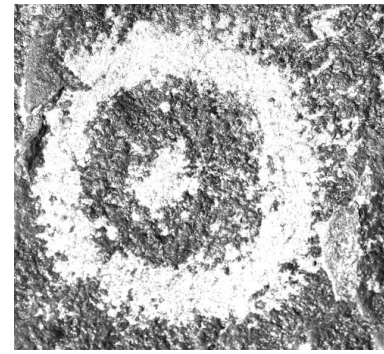


Figure 2: Brat petroglyph in Fuyun County, Altay Region (Photo credit: Self-drawn)



Figure 3: Huogamu petroglyph in Urumqi City (Photo credit: Self-drawn)



Figure 4: Deer petroglyph in Qinghe County, Altay (Photo credit: Self-drawn)



Figure 5: Togralgele petroglyph, Yecheng County, Kashgar (Part) (Photo credit: Self-drawn)

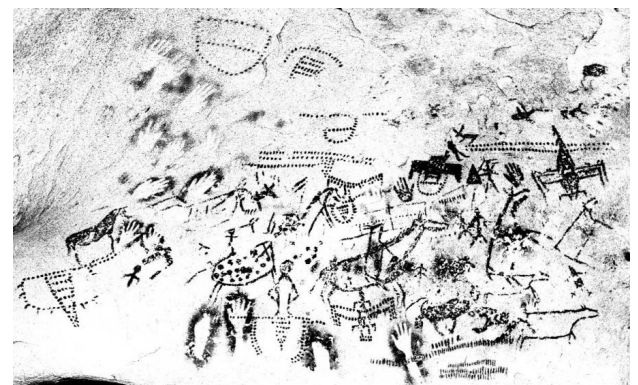


Figure 6: Dogat cave painted petroglyphs, Habaxhe County, Altay (Photo credit: Self-drawn)

its self-centered self-sufficiency character. The arrangement of dots, whether grouped or dispersed, established a variance between reality and virtuality that allowed the petroglyph artists to represent the unseen divine realm that only existed in their imaginations. Whether they are congregated or dispersed, dots in petroglyphs go beyond mere depiction because they create an “empty” space between the spiritual and the objective worlds where reality and the spirit interact. However, in certain petroglyphs, the image of the item is surrounded by dispersed or dense dots. Most petroglyphs are drawn directly on the rock surface to create a true image close to the objective creatures. Most of the petroglyphs are made directly on the rock surface to create a real image close to the objective beings, but in some petroglyphs, the image of the object is surrounded by scattered or dense dots. These dots create an artificial “virtual” background, which makes space-time extensions possible in two-dimensional space, imparting dynamics and mystery to static images. The arrangement and spacing of the dots make the image virtual or real. Virtual and real images echo each other, forming a symbolic meaning beyond words, reflecting the complex emotions and psychological activities of early humans about the world, such as confusion, bewilderment, fantasy, speculation, and mystery. Figure 4 shows a deer petroglyph in Qinghe County, Altay. On the upper part of the rock, there are dotted lines dividing the surface into the sky and the earth. The “circle” symbolizes the sun, while the deer with a “bird’s beak, humped back and horns” heads up against the sky to chase the sun. The “virtual” line formed by dots defines the boundary between the real world and the illusionary world, while the “virtual” part provides a spiritual buffer zone where people can cross, exchange, and communicate. Figure 5 shows a part of the Togral Gele petroglyph in Yecheng County, Kashgar. The red handprints and thick stripes in the petroglyph are decorated with repeated white dots, creating a dazzling sense of ecstasy. In this way, the image of handprints is detached from objective figurative features and becomes a symbol full of mystery, making the image highly decorative. The dots are the most fundamental components of life. The rich and profound expression of dots makes the petroglyph both expressive and decorative. When combined with lines and planes, dots become an important aesthetic element of petroglyph, making a variety of meaningful images.

Figure 6 shows the colored petroglyphs of Dogat Cave in Habahe County, Altay. The petroglyphs are dominated by animals, with a man and two enormous creatures in the middle. This creature looks like a spotted giraffe with its long neck and distinctive markings. Additionally, there are several handprints and symbols, as well as animals like cows and horses. This image appears to show a Wu praying for the harvest based on the symbols of humans, animals, and handprints that are present. Some of the animals, figures, symbols, and handprints seen in the petroglyphs are “real images,” delineated by lines or shades, while others are “virtual images,” created by sporadic dots. Such alterations extend from the two-dimensional plane into spacetime, both actual and virtual. The dots alter an object’s formality and provide a “virtual image” that combines realism with spirit. The meaningful connection between the specific image and the symbol formed on the virtual image expanded the story space infinitely. The dot is an essential modeling element; and it is the genesis of all objects, and its repetition and continuity possess a life. The juxtaposition of the holy world and ordinary life is made possible by humans’ employment of dots to progressively transform their insubstantial consciousness into visible representations. People construct layers of the universe in their perception using clustered and dispersed dots, building a perfect and ethereal world of worship to escape the limitations of ordinary living and fulfill their desires for survival, reproduction, and harvests.

4. LINE STRUCTURE IN ROCK PAINTINGS

Lines are a highly expressive modeling element. Its variations in curvature, length, and thickness create a wide variety of interesting images. The straight line is rational and calm, the curve is sensual and active, the thick line is heavy and solid, the thin line is frail and delicate, the long line is extended, and the short line is decisive. The diversified emotions expressed by lines impart meaningful connotation to images and inject vitality to the shape.

Since lines are the trajectory of moving dots, they are dynamic and energetic. Line is one of the most crucial expressing approaches to

summarize and refine the things in petroglyphs since early humans were highly sensitive to the shape and contour of objects. The lines in petroglyphs were painted or chiseled. The texture of the lines changed due to the crude tools. With differences in thickness, firmness, texture stroke, and brush stroke, painted lines seem more agile. The chiseled lines on the surface of the rock with metal or stone tools demonstrate different thickness and depth. Although such chiseled lines chiseled are plain, austere, and tough, they are less smooth as hand-painted ones, and these variations show a hybrid art form of painting and sculpting. The majority of the figures in the petroglyphs are comprised of short, straight lines that outline the basic body structure and motions. The simplicity of the figures implies a humble self-awareness. Animals are the major objects in most Xinjiang rock paintings. Primitive artists emphasize the representational qualities and movement of the animals in a generalized and simplified manner, drawing the lines in accordance with the animal’s form. As human cognitive awareness and expressive ability improved, the expression of lines became increasingly rich and diverse, and the images evolved from figurative recreating to imaginative expression. As a result, the designs and ornamental elements of the rock art became more pronounced, reflecting the utilitarian nature of early humans’ primitive aesthetic consciousness developed by instinct.



Figure 7: Yingu petroglyphs in Urumqi (Photo credit: Self-drawn)



Figure 8: Altai petroglyphs in altai region (Photo credit: Self-drawn)

Figure 7 depicts a herding and hunting scene from the Yingu Petroglyphs in Urumqi. The sheep and human figurines are both in linear shape. Short lines are used to delineate the human form, which is subtle in compared to the animals. However, the movement of holding a bow and launching an arrow is vibrant and vivid. A single line depicted the main traits of the three sheep, which turns naturally to illustrate that the running animal according to its physical body structure. Figure 7 demonstrates the artist’s deft use of expression. The picture is made elegant, strong, and athletic by the employment of arcs, which are used to depict the sheep’s horns in exaggerated, smooth, long arcs that completely show the veneration of almighty power. Figure 8 depicts a deer from the Altai petroglyphs. Thick lines are used to define the body, while small lines spaced equally apart cover the blank body, exhibiting a decorative attractiveness. The symmetrical branch-like design of the antlers is carved with fine, straight lines to highlight their rigid, powerful texture. Based on the thickness and rhythmic order of the lines, the deer images transcend the real objects and become meaningful symbols.

The curves are flowing, undulating. Vibrant and graceful curves inject vitality into the simple and rustic rock art images. Figure 9 is deer images found in Dogat rock paintings in Habahe County. Orderly wavy

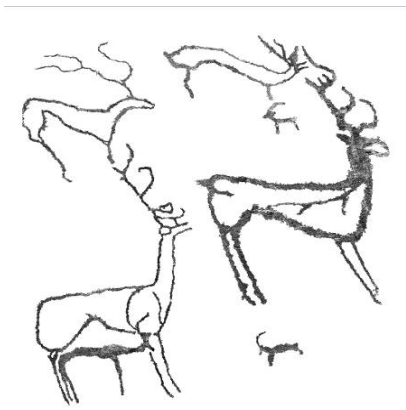


Figure 9: Dogat petroglyph in Habahe County, Altay (Photo credit: Self-drawn)

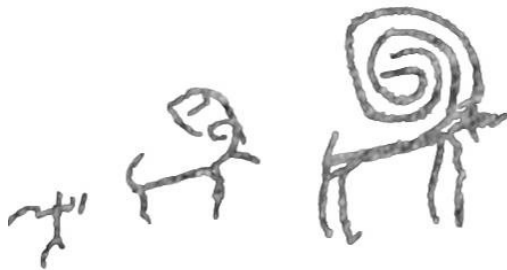


Figure 10: Jiuquan petroglyph of Dongwozi, Mubi County, Changji (Photo credit: Self-drawn)

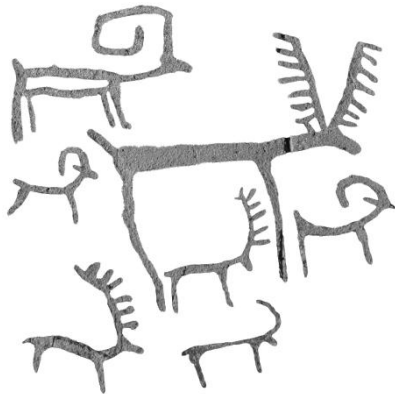


Figure 11: Xuyongchale petroglyph, Fuyun County, Altay (Photo credit: Self-drawn)

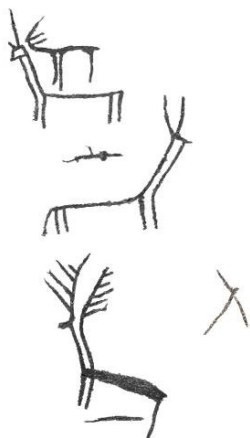


Figure 12: Talbay petroglyph, Turks County, Yili (Photo credit: Self-drawn)

lines highlight the towering and upright antlers. The dynamic wavy lines impart a sense of rhythmic and infinite extension to the antlers. Such an image represents people's imagination and expectation of mystical force, making the antlers more beautiful and attractive. Figure 10 shows the image of an argali in the Jiuquan petroglyph in Dongwozi, Mugi County, Changji. The main distinguishing feature of an argali is its curly horns. The primitive artists of the petroglyphs believed that the horns of the sheep gathered some mystical "force" that could protect human fertility and reproduction. Driven by Wu's thinking, these characteristics would be strengthened in the wish of being interpenetrated with stronger force. The winding effect of the spiral cause's visual hallucinations, which is more likely to trigger visions and imagination. Primitive people repeated the curly horns of argali to form a dazzling multiple spiral. The spiral forms a near-perfect circle, enhancing the decorative effect of the argali image. This form serves a purpose other than aesthetics; it serves to strengthen the utilitarian Wu activities. The lines in Xinjiang petroglyphs in general are brutal, simple, strong and powerful, organically combining spontaneity, neat order and graceful fluidity. Various line forms impart a natural, simple, and straightforward feature to Xinjiang petroglyphs, reflecting the collective aesthetic orientation and aesthetic style evolved with the primitive nomadic tribes' long-term coexistence with nature.

Figure 11 illustrates the animal images of the Xu Yongchal petroglyph in Fuyun County, Altay. Deer, argali, bharal, and goats are all shaped by different kinds of lines. The deer among them are greater in size. The deer's muscular bodies are outlined by thick lines, while their legs are formed with straighter lines to convey their upright and nimble posture.



Figure 13: Quan Gou petroglyph, Altay City, Altay (Photo credit: Self-drawn)



Figure 14: Bukulsayi petroglyph in Gongliu County, Yili (Photo credit: Self-drawn)

The branches are made with evenly spaced small straight lines on both sides, like a comb, and the antlers are symmetrically V-shaped with straight lines. The short, ordered lines create a beauty that is regular and elegant. The argali has exaggerated spiral horns, a goat's horn is painted with curves, and the Bharal has a single-toothed horn painted in neat, short lines. The fact that virtually all animal pictures center on the horn shows how much importance early humans had placed on "power." The petroglyphs' repeated and arranged lines have a rhythmic structure, making the artwork aesthetically pleasing. The primary ideas of survival and reproduction are related to repetition and order, which highlights the symbolic significance of the picture and the expression of personal will.

5. PLANE MODELING

Silhouette modeling is a specific expression of block plane, created by chiseling or grinding. The shape of a silhouette conveys an object's profile in a broad sense. The silhouette picture is finished; however, it is unpolished and unrefined. The block is molded flexibly according to the shape of the object, giving little regard to details, illustrating how flat objects are, and creating a striking and distinct visual impression. To emphasize the significance of the picture, most of the important or symbolic elements in petroglyphs are shaped in silhouettes. As seen in Figure 13, a sheep is silhouetted using a mix of lines and planes in a petroglyph from Quangu, Altay. The body of the object is carved by grinding to create a block shape, and the hollowed-out square in the centre of the body denotes that it is a female sheep's abdomen, which is a sign of breeding and reproduction. Spiral curves are used to symbolize the sheep's horns, giving them a sense of mobility. The dramatic contrast between the static body block and the dynamic spiral line of the horns gives the sheep picture vibrancy by organically combining square and circular, static and dynamic elements. Figure 14 shows the sheep at the Bukursayi petroglyph in Gongliu County. Both the large and tiny sheep are depicted in silhouette, and the block shapes depict the side silhouette of the sheep, especially the exaggerated horns, ears, and genitals of the larger sheep, which symbolize the fertility of the male. The exaggerated horns and genitalia are the main focus of people's attention, while the blocky shapes convey the robust nature of the sheep's body. These characteristics, together with the smaller sheep, symbolize the admiration that humans have for reproduction and fertility.



Figure 15: Serhad petroglyph in hejing county, Bazhou (Photo credit: self-drawn)

The primary form of petroglyph expression is a mix of dots, lines, and planes. Petroglyphs act and express themselves more effectively in recording, narrating, and expressing emotions thanks to the focus of the dots, agility of the lines, and weight of the planes, which together produce images of diverse shapes and patterns. Figure 15 shows the animal drawing in the petroglyph of Serhad, Bazhou County. Deer, horses, and people are shown as silhouetted and linear images. The two deer, as well as the horse, are depicted in silhouette, with the leading deer's primary physical characteristics being realistically replicated. In order to show the deer's robust body and the texture of its fur, the artist filled in the

body with thick chisel dots after first outlining it with lines. In order to accurately depict a deer staring back, artisans have left the deer's head blank to allow for the carving of its eyes. The artist's great expressive talents and capability are evident in how precisely they captured the shape and movements of the limbs. The antlers have a symmetrical "V"-shaped form and are embellished with tidy, short lines that resemble comb teeth. Such a blown-up aesthetic conveys a feeling of organized beauty. The torso of the second deer is filled with grinding carving in a smooth and attractive shape, and it is likewise made in a silhouette without any features. When painting the horse, the artist employed a basic silhouette to accentuate the animal's essential qualities. The exaggerated V-shaped antlers consist of comb-like formations with short, ordered lines, so the antlers seem graceful and thin. The outlines of additional petroglyphic pictures are then drawn by the artist using straightforward lines. The polished and delicate artwork showed how painting techniques enhance petroglyph expressiveness by making the lines smooth and thin. In particular, the group of figures of a man leading a horse in the upper left corner is particularly delicate. The artist used smooth lines to outline the physical features of the horse, particularly the details of accessories such as the saddle, stirrup, and reins. The human figure, on the other hand, is rather plain and diminutive. The deer takes center stage since its outline is so clear and vivid throughout the whole petroglyph. In petroglyph, depicting the symbol of reverence is the main purpose of petroglyph. Artists recreated the real objects with lines while the image in silhouette is clearly the primary role in the whole painting. The juxtaposition of line and silhouette images creates a clear distinction between primary and secondary. The comparison of dots, lines, and planes highlights the contrasts between virtual and real, black and white, primary and secondary. The painting consists of different layers and shows a dynamic rhythm, creating a changing and interesting aesthetic form. The artist of the petroglyph used dots, lines, and planes to standardize and beautify the natural objects in a specific way. As a result, these painted representations started to take on an abstract and symbolic quality, showing that people had started to deliberately and purposefully alter and dominate nature in a sensuous way. More crucially, aesthetic consciousness in humans developed over time.

6. THE LAW OF PRIMITIVE FORM

"The synthesis of an image's form and semantics is called an image ontology. Form is content because it facilitates the transmission and communication of meaning. It includes not only the organization of material forms but also the organization of structural relationships of key semantic morphemes in image shaping against different contexts such as shape, color, light and dark, spatial position and texture. These morphemes are organized together in a way that triggers visual pleasure to construct the organizing law of form, the aesthetic law, and the law of empirical association, and, on top of that, the constitutive grammar of meaning."

Primitive aesthetic psychology derives from the natural world and human connection with objects in production activities. Humans are innately drawn to the natural beauty, which gives them sensual pleasure that eventually purifies into spiritual joy. These enjoyable formal experiences progressively incorporated into mental schema, creating beautiful forms that satisfy both spiritual needs and the needs of the basic cognitive consciousness. These artistic expressions met the spiritual and pleasurable requirements of incorporating natural energies into human beings. The forms of petroglyphs serve the reverence consciousness born from the human instinct for survival, reflecting human cognition and thinking through the interaction of subject and object. Humans accept and incorporate self-serving forms that come from nature as they engage with it, creating a visual style that satisfies their specific psychological demands. et. Simultaneously, primitive people continually strengthened, updated, and rebuilt the mental schema in accordance with external changes and requirements of subjective will, managing to maintain the relationship between subject and object in a comparatively stable and balanced contextual condition. People imparted human life characteristics to nature and objects through imagination, empathy, and personification, which help human beings internalize the mental imagery of human beings' reverence and worship for nature. The sense of form adds more ideal elements to the externalization of the mental imagery, for example, the rock art. Rock art has a higher degree of subjective consciousness and aesthetic sensitivity despite its natural origins. It is the sense of form that makes the rock art transcend natural objects and evolve to be a perfect symbol of divinity. In the process of reshaping nature and materializing mind imagery, people used



Figure 16: Sigonghe petroglyph in fukang, Changji (Photo credit: self-drawn)

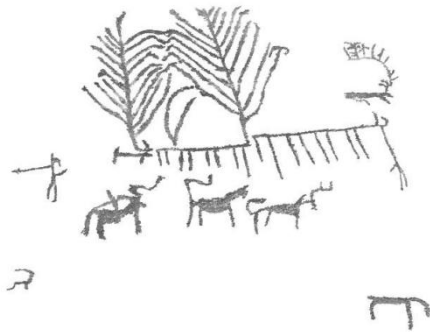


Figure 17: Xingdi petroglyph, Yuli County, Bazhou (Photo credit: self-drawn)



Figure 18: Tatkeskoras petroglyph in Jimnai County, Altay (Photo credit: self-drawn)

different techniques of form to strengthen the utilitarian and practical nature of primitive worship culture, in which natural objects became the symbols of worship and the main characters in the narratives to express human emotions. Primitive painters employed all senses of form derived through work activities that mirrored the purpose of human life, including symmetry, balance, rhythm, and order, to the production of rock art pictures. Rock art style progressed steadily from simplicity and roughness to refinement and complexity, while the art form itself evolved from instinctively copying the natural world to creating inventive expression on purpose. This development also improved the aesthetic expressiveness and aesthetic psychology of the petroglyph, raising its aesthetic value.

Figure 16 shows the argali in the petroglyph of Sigonghe in Fukang, Changji. The torso of the argali is made up of two symmetrical triangles, and the silhouette of the argali uses lines and planes to shape the overall features of the animal in a geometric structure. The limbs of the argali are straight, adding to the torso's geometry to create a tidy, regular shape. The ears, mouth, and tail are marked with short, simple arcs, while the spiral curve of the head magnifies the shape of the horns. The overall image of the argali is neatly and delicately geometric. Lines and planes create a contrast between heaviness and delicacy, curvature and straightness. The symmetrical form of the argali image, in particular, contains graphic and symbolic meaning. Inspired by natural objects, the artists of the petroglyph highlight the main features of the objects in a simplified and selective way based on their subjective reverence. The strong "power" of the horns and the useful "force" of the body are the characteristics of the painting that humans were most interested in. The psychological need for the Wu of fertility is satisfied by the symmetry itself, which stands for reproduction and repetition. After the subjective transformation, the object has lost its connection to its original natural form and has been transformed into an imaginative symbol. The image has a more complex symbolic interpretation due to the mix of lines and planes, symmetry, contrast, and other aesthetic aspects.

Figure 17 depicts a pastoral scene from the Xingdi petroglyph in Yuli County, Bazhou. The painting depicts an idyllic pastoral scene where

a herd of cattle, horses, and sheep are strolling leisurely on the grass, with one rider and one standing person guarding the herd. A fence enclosing the herd at the upper end of the image suggests that the primitive nomadic had raised animals in a confined manner. Two trees were standing erect outside the fence. The straight tree trunks have symmetrically placed branches on either side of the main stem. The precise and orderly arrangement of the straight twigs creates a feeling of order and rhythm. Animals and figures are modeled in silhouette, while fences and trees are expressed in lines. The straight lines provide a clear and appealing image with a tranquil and remote environment. The people and animals close to the audience are emphasized by planes, highlighting the dominance of the image. Particularly, the cow with the lifted tail gives the entire image life. The primary and secondary colors in the image are easily distinguished by the contrast between the virtual and the reality, static and motion, curve and straight, as well as the organized rhythm and rhyme. This petroglyph is more than just a simple drawing of a scene. The primitive artist devoted particular attention to the animals and living surroundings as indicated by the image ratios and the dominant image, and conveyed the subjective desire of the primitive nomads for successful livestock husbandry and a peaceful existence.

Figure 18 is a petroglyph of Tatkeskoras in Jimnai County, depicting a pastoral hunt. There are archers holding bows and arrows and exaggerated male animal figures, distinctly conveying the worship of fertility and harvest. The images are profile in silhouette, which is the most common form in rock art. The entire petroglyph is finely carved with smooth lines and beautiful shapes, indicating that the carving tools at this stage had greatly improved. Images obtained a patterned aesthetic through the programmatic expression of modeling. Forms such as symmetry, balance, and rhythm recur in the image, showing that the artist had a high sense of aesthetics and expressive skills. The three deer images on the left side of the picture vary in size but have distinctive features, mainly expressed by their exaggerated antlers. All antlers are expressed in symmetrical form with upward straight lines, while the antler branches are made of short straight lines distributed in rhythmic form at equal intervals, highlighting the stylistic tension of the deer image. Horns are the focus of this sheep image. The artist used regular curves, arcs, and spirals to model the horns and distinguish the image characteristics of different argali by changing the thickness, rotation, direction and length of the lines. The horns of the argali are shaped in the form of regular concentric circles with spiral lines, while the horns of the bighorn sheep are expressed in exaggerated arcs, and the horns of the goat are slender and smooth. The horse's figure is rounded and full, with slender ears and legs highlighting the features. The human figures remain minimalist, holding bows and arrows to maintain contact with the animals. All the figures are modeled in silhouette and shaped according to the appearance of real objects while highlighting local features. The artist utilized forms and techniques comprehensively, including symmetry, balance, repetition, and rhythm, to make the picture in a neat and exquisite pattern. The development of petroglyph from rough realism to exquisite freestyle is marked by the self-restrained use of form, which shows that rudimentary aesthetic consciousness has been first developed. Petroglyphs' expressive and representational abilities were further strengthened by their beautiful shape, which reflected the

irrational emotional preferences and aesthetic judgments of people in daily activities. As a kind of prehistoric art, petroglyphs adhere to the universal laws of creative creation and aesthetics, which satisfy basic human emotional requirements.

Petroglyphs not only record and present the real life of a primitive nomadic society, but also create a "force field" of life between man and nature under the philosophy of Wu. In this "force field", man and nature form a two-way relationship, and formal transformation is a way for man to perform Wu. It is also a way for man to receive the effects of nature. Based on spiritual will and aesthetic cognition, human beings create ideal images through different forms of beauty and techniques. These images serve as the carriers of subjective human will. The aesthetic forms rendered and strengthened the effect and function of images, and human beings also gained psychological satisfaction and delight in appreciating and pleasing the gods. The early humans applied aesthetic experience and laws acquired in survival practices to image creation, so they not only strengthened the utilitarian function of rock art but also made the decorative and aesthetic characteristics of petroglyph more distinct. In his study of primitive aesthetic psychology, Mr. Zhang Zobang proposed, "Totem thinking created the cultural activities and aesthetic psychology of the clan, realizing a diverse but unified aesthetic spirit. It is this magical and fantasy way of thinking that constitutes the initial and most important cornerstone, laying the psychological basis for the birth and development of primitive aesthetic psychology and primitive culture. It is on this cornerstone that primitive humans gradually developed the ability to select, refine, and organize images, cultivated aesthetics and evolved an aesthetic psychological structure of "appreciating God through illusion."

As human self-cognitive knowledge and social productivity advance, petroglyphs, as the objects of veneration by nomadic societies for life and spirits, have been infused with the will of living. Petroglyphs reflect the subjective and dynamic creative will of human beings. Human beings consciously used various forms of beauty to strengthen their subjective will, facilitating the evolution of natural objects from their native form into symbols carrying emotional will. The social structure and the environment are the exterior factors influencing the rudimentary

aesthetic consciousness, whereas the human way of thinking, the notion of worship, and the awareness of life are the factors influencing the aesthetic spirit inside. In general, exterior causes gave birth to aesthetic awareness by providing the raw materials and foundation, whereas interior causes advanced aesthetic consciousness. In order to create externalized forms and connotative meanings that better meet the subject's spiritual needs, people tried a variety of means and methods to distinguish the semantics of petroglyphs and beautify their forms. Based on these efforts, they built aesthetic patterns that complement the reverence. The emergence of primitive aesthetic consciousness is the result of human self-awareness. Since rock art is a manifestation of primitive aesthetics, it mirrors a specific utilitarian trait and is isomorphic to the cultural morph of prehistoric civilization.

When communicating with goals and gods through rock art, nomadic groups were spiritually invigorated and delighted. They were also thrilled by the aesthetic beauty. As a result, primitive aesthetics is an intentional development of order based on human subjects' survival requirements. Primitive aesthetic practice is constantly connected to humans' survival-oriented utilitarian goal. The rule of life that governs how people find, pursue, and produce beauty is one that is favorable for survival. Primitive rock art is alive and full of spirit because of the rule of life.

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