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Recent Exploration of Rock Art in Malakand District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

Abstract

The Malakand district has to hold a very significant ancient and archaeological background in the region of Gandhara. In general, there have several rock art discoveries earned by the Antiquarians and archaeologists in the Gandhara region. Particular in the Malakand district the explorations of rock art have credited by Olivieri (2002, 2013, and 2015), Nazir Khan (1995) and Bahadur Khan (1999) have documented many rock art sites. The present research article is limited to rock art in the area. Besides, during the recent Archaeological Survey in the Malakand district (2016-17), twenty more new painted sites of anticipated Pre-Buddhist and Buddhist periods have documented. These newly explored paintings comprised of different images of animals, hunting scenes, Buddhist Stupas and some un-identified images that are illustrated on the ceilings of rock shelters. Among these newly painted shelters, four rock carvings sites, four cup-marks sites and one site of wine pressers have explored during the campaign. In conclusion, it purports the significance of rock art in the Malakand district archaeology and threats to these ancient remains.

Keywords: Malakand district, rock art, painted shelters, carvings, cup-marks, wine presser, threats.

Introduction:

The Malakand district in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, has covered about 952 square kilometres area. The topography lies on latitude north 34.5000° and longitude east 71.7500° approximately with the height of 2705 feet from the sea level. The demography of the district has over 4.5 lakhs according to the population census report of 1998.

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The region is positioned on strategically significant position and severing like a doorway Chitral, Dir, Swat and Bajwar via Dargai from Mardan district (Fig.1).

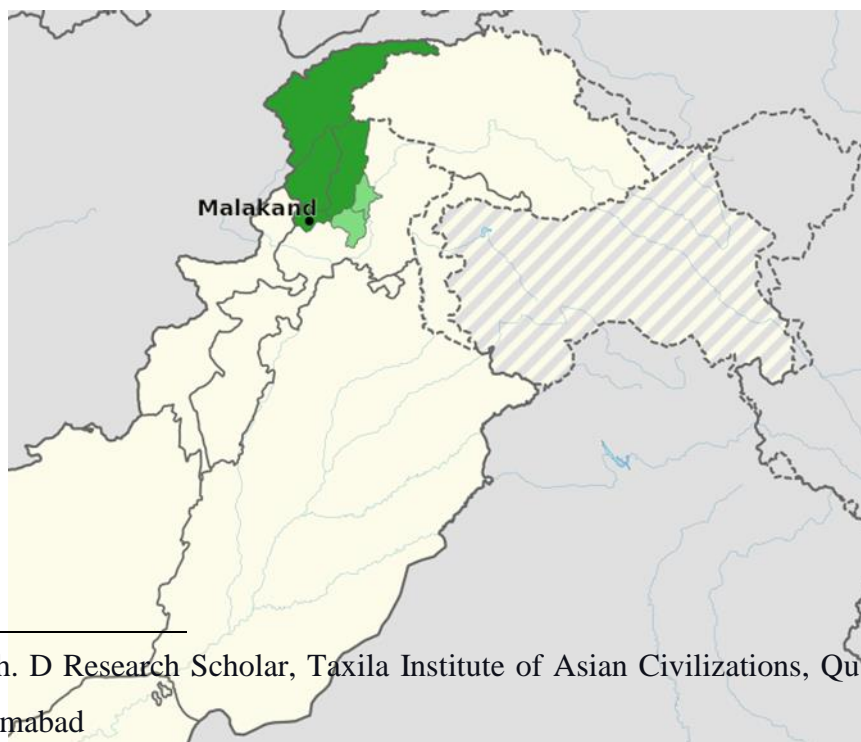


Fig. Location of district on Map

Malakand Pakistan

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Malakand district has distinctly surrounded by the boundaries of the prominence and peaks that build series with further alongside expanses of the Gandhara region. The settings of the area are very vertical, with ridges and curves that have also led to the natural rock boulders and shelters. The sites in the Gandhara region can be aligned from the assemblage of tools of likely earliest historical spell-classified practices by G. Stacul (1967, 1987), Stein 1930, Barger and Wright 1942. In Asia, there is no such congregation of rock art as that of the Pakistan northern areas. The significant location and archaeological profusion have the core for attractiveness since the first half of the 19 century for the antiquarian (See Court 1839, 1840, Cunningham 1848, 1871, Abbot 1854, Deane 1896, Caddy 1896, Stein 1898, Tucci 1958). The archaeologists recorded numerous rock art sites; these categories included rock carvings (See Bahadur Khan 1999) painted rock shelters (See Nazir Khan 1995, Vidale & Olivieri 2002, Oliveri 2005, Olivieri. 2013, Sardar 2016, Naz & Sardar 2021) cup-marks (See Bahadur Khan 1999, Vidale & Olivieri, 2002, Naz & Sardar 2021) that added new chapters in the archaeology of Malakand district. During the archaeological survey of Malakand district 2016-2017, among the ancient settlement's structures, the survey team reported rock art sites. This research article is limited to the rock art of the Malakand district.

The focus of the author is centred on the newly explored rock art sites in the area under investigation. In the present research paper, the researcher divided these rock art into the following categories:

Pictographs

1. Human Figures
2. Warriors
3. Hunters
4. Horseback riders
5. Man
6. Domestic Animals
7. Horses
8. Dogs
9. Humped Bull
10. deer
11. Designs
12. Buddhist architecture
13. Geometrical designs
14. Unidentified images

Petroglyphs

1. Human Figures
 2. Human Mask
 3. Footprint
- Animals
4. Bull
 5. Dog
 6. Goat
 7. Horse
-

¹A Preliminary report published in PJSEL, Vol. 7 No. 1, 2021 (See Naz & Sardar 2021:185-203)

3. Geometrical designs

1. Unidentified Marks
2. Cup-Marks
3. Wine Pressers

Pictographs

In the said area there have an extended number of painted shelters. About twenty-four painted rock shelters have documented during the survey (206-2017). These rock shelters have depicted with early historical and Buddhist period paintings (Vidale, M., & Olivieri, L. M.2002:173-223). Some paintings have overlapped with each other in context with periodization. Some rock-paintings dating are equally problematic. All the figures have depicted in red colour, but in the previously recorded Nokuno Ghund II site, the colour of the paintings are pink, blue, and yellow and white (Nazir Khan 1995: 333, Vidale & Olivieri 2002:189, Sardar 2016:128-130)

The paintings depicted on rock shelters are of, Human figures, some carrying weapons, like shields, axes, some are unidentified objects, some men figure depicted with horse riding, bull rider, besides these dogs, deer, bull, horses in red colour paintings. Some rock shelters bearing hunting scenes and some have symbols of

unidentified signs. Besides these, there are some paintings depicting trees and floral. Following are the finds of the current research:

Hunting Scenes

1. Spago-Gharai-I (or Zwarand-Kamar)²

The painted shelter of Spago-Gharai- I, or Zwarand-Kamar, has positioned at the north side about 200 meters of Mora Banda village. The shelter's measurement is 2 x 2.5 x 2.5 meters. Pair of equestrians in running posture and another couple of horse riders has standing in the position depicted on the rock shelter's surface.

2. Spago-Gharai-II (or Zwarand-Kamar)³

The mountains of Mora Banda hill, the site of Spago-Gharai-II shelter has situated. It has measures about 6 x 4, 1x 5.5 meters. The hunting scene has depicted on the surface, horseback riders shooting arrows from bows on mountain goats in moving position in the paintings.

²Site No.60 MLK.17 of Naz and Sardar (2021:194)

³Site No.61 MLK.17 of Naz and Sardar (2021:194)

Few of the human figures have represented throwing spears on ibexes, which have reported during the survey.

Horseback Rider and Warrior

3. Rahil Kamar-I, Mora Banda⁴

Rahil Kamar painted shelter also situated in the village of Mora Banda. The giant boulders have positioned in the east, about 2km from the village's main road. Red colour figures of arrows, horses, men and wild animals have reported on the surface of the boulder. The current state of preservation is good for the painted images.

4. Bakurao-Kandao-I Mora Banda⁵

On the north of village Mora Banda, the shelter has located about 3 kilometres from Palai main road. The shelter's measurement is 1.5 meters in width; the length is 4 meters, and the height is 1.5 meter. The complete 11 paintings have white and red colours with illustrations of hunting scenes comprised of wild animals, men, and horses. The whole paintings are in good condition for the preservation

5. Bakurao-Kandao-II⁶

Painted rock shelter in Mora Banda, this 1 meter deep shelter is located to the north of Mora Banda. It is formed by a circular rock and bears in its interior 15 painted images of horses and men probably chasing some wild animals.

6. Bema Ghwand, KuzaBazdara⁷

On the North of Koza Bazdara village, the painted shelter has 4 x 3 x 3meters in measurement. A huge rock forms the cover, and its southern sideshow painted images of horseback rider's holdup arrows and bows.

⁴Site No.32 MLK.17 of Naz and Sardar (2021:190)

⁵Site No.33 MLK.17 of Naz and Sardar (2021:190)

⁶Site No.34 MLK.17 of Naz and Sardar (2021:190)

⁷Site No.63 MLK.17 of Naz and Sardar (2021:192)

7. Khaista-Terai, Bakurao Kandao⁸

To the north of village Mora Banda, the painted rock cover has situated about 4 km on the eastern side of Palai. The shelter's height is 4 meters, width is 5 meters, and depth is 3.5 meters (fig.2). On the rock's interior surface, about 60 painted images have illustrated with the images of horse riders holding bows and shooting arrows on wild animals (fig.3). A fighting scene has to represent human figures with swords charging on each other. All the images are in moving states postures. The ibex and mountain goats have illustrates in running position from the hunters and attackers (fig.4, 5).

Fig.2.View of Terai painted



Khaista boulder

Fig.3.Images of scene on the surface at Terai painted



hunting rock Khaista boulder

Fig.4.Close-up red colour depicted on the surface, Khaista



view of paintings rock Terai site

Fig.5. A close-up



view of a

hunting scene on the rock surface
Khaista Terai boulder

⁸Site No.35 MLK.17 of Naz and Sardar (2021:190)

8. Mamai-Gharai, KuzaBazdara, Palai⁹

The shelter has located to the NE of Koza Bazadara, approximately 2meters. The 2 metres long and 1.5 meters wide shelter could approach via a rocky patch. The southern paintings are unscathed; represent the horse riders with the red colour image, to the north side of the rock shelter, a notable horizontal boulder semi-interred in the earth. The apparent part depicted a small basin with a chiselled inscribed outlet wine water flow.

Human Figure

9. Jaghono-Gatt, Mora Banda¹⁰

The site has positioned on the north side of Mora Banda. There is a giant rock boulder, most likely an anthropomorphic figure on the mountain top of Mora Banda (fig.6). Another rock shelter connected with the large cover in the same area (fig.7). The paintings on the rock surface have comprised of dogs, horses and other animals.



Fig.6.general view of Jaghono-Gatt painted boulder

⁹Site No.60 MLK.17 of Naz and Sardar (2021:192)

¹⁰Site No.36 MLK.17 of Naz and Sardar (2021:190)

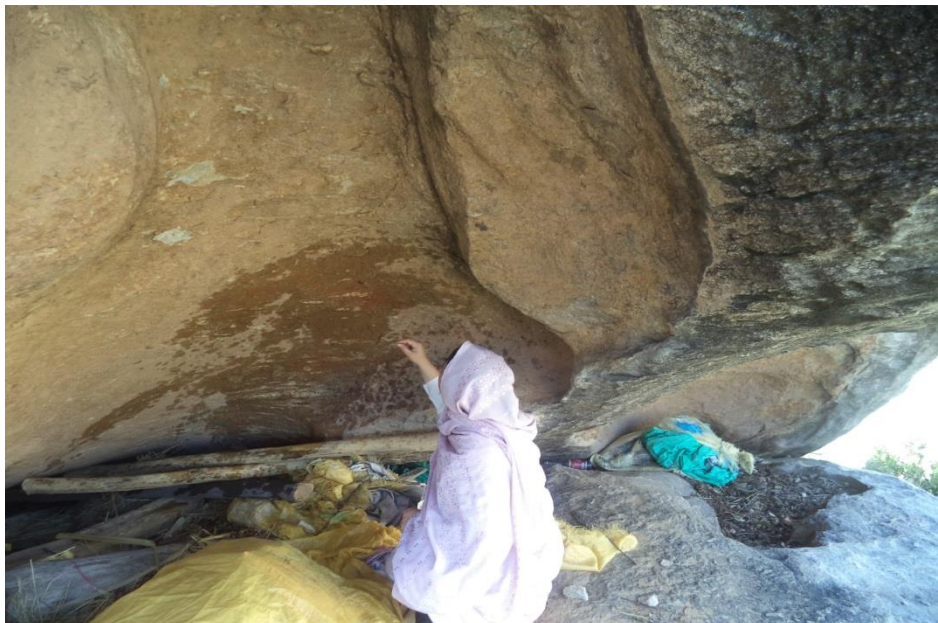


Fig.7. Another rock boulder at Jaghono-Gatt

10. JamuTapo, KuzaBazdara¹¹

The rock shelter has situated north of Koza Bazdara. The depth is 6 meters, and 4 meters has a comprehensive cover bearing red colour paintings on the surface—few of the equestrians have a moving position while the figures of human taking spears and axes. Among the painted images, some execute dark red colour and preserved.

Domestic Animals

11. Bari Badi khundu, Gir Banda¹²

Gir Banda has situated on the north of village Mora Banda on the road heading to Loya Banda. The rock shelter dimension is about 2.5 meters in depth, the height is about 1.5 meter, and the width is 6 meters (fig.8). The shelter's inner surface has depicted with thirteen red colour painted images comprised of animals (dogs and horses); a few of them are identical animals and human figures. The paintings illustrate hunting scenes, but most of the images are vandalised and in poor preservation conditions.

¹¹Site No.62MLK of Naz and Sardar (2021:192)

¹²Site No.28 MLK of Naz and Sardar (2021:189)



Fig.8. A general view of Dadri Khundu, boulder

Bari rock

12. Chatrai Kamar-II, Gir Banda, Palai¹³

The site has located north of Mora-Banda and to the west of Palai road. The site adopted two types of nature, paintings on rock shelter and Buddhist time ruins. Illegal activities destroyed the site, but the rock shelter bearing images still exist.

Humped Bull, Elephant

13. Gidaro-Nao, Mora-Banda, Palai¹⁴

The painted shelter has situated on the East Mountains of Mora Banda village. The dimensions are measuring about 8 x 7.5 x 7 meters (fig.9). There are painted themes presenting extractions of hunting scene indigenous animals comprised of humped bull, elephants with some unrevealed animals in red colour on the cover inside surface (fig.10).

¹³Site



No.29MLK of Naz and Sardar (2021:189)

Fig.9. View Gidaro Nao painted rock shelter



Fig.10.
Hunting
scene
depicted
the rock
surface in
red colour

on

¹⁴Site No.41 MLK of Naz and Sardar (2021:190)

14. Mandao-Gharai Gat, Mora-Banda (Palai) ¹⁵

Painted shelter of Mandao-Gharai Gat positioned about 2 kilometres eastern side of Mora Banda. The maximum depth of the shelter measures about 4.50 metres, and the width is 8.20 meters. The shelter's inner surface bears the painted scenes of wild goats and horned bulls chasing by equestrians. It is an extended shelter in a crescent form; the cover has formed by a flat rock lying on a huge boulder. The rock shelter is beautiful and painted in red colour, currently used as a resting place by children. The total number of figures is eight, of which three are of animals, and three are of bull riding men, and two cannot identify.

15. Juwar Khan-I, KuzaBazdara ¹⁶

Juwar Khan-I painted a rock shelter is situated near the Deewana Baba site about 3km north of Koza Bazdara. The cover is a length of 18.288m, and inside deepens is 6.096m. The small shelter bears paintings of wild animals, including ibex, horned bulls and mountain goat.

Sun Disc and Deities

16. Sira-Qwanj, Mora Banda¹⁷

The site of Sira-Qwanj paintings is a part of a mountain in the village of Mora Banda. The location of the site is about 4 kilometres on the north side of the village. The vertical shaped hilly cliff bears about six images of paintings comprising a sun disc and a deity (Fig.11).

¹⁵Site No.48 MLK of Naz and Sardar (2021:191)

¹⁶Site No.69 MLK of Naz and Sardar (2021:193)

¹⁷Site No.37 MLK of Naz and Sardar (2021:190)



Fig.11. View paintings on boulder, Sira Qwanj site

of rock

Buddhist Architecture, Stupa

17. Jamu-Gatta, KuzaBazdara (Palai)¹⁸

The shelter of Jamu-Gatta has located on the NE of Koza Bazdara, about 50 meters from the shelter of Mamai-Ghari. These two rock shelters are located alongside one another, providing enough space for accommodation. The shelter length is 12.192m, and the height is 9.144m. The interior sides have painted with indigenous animals with horse riders and the illustration of Buddhist stupas (fig.12). These stupas have been accomplished with dark red colour paintings, while the remaining with the depictions in light red. Besides other images, there is one stupa with dark red illustrated on the shelter with base, dome and drum and chatras (fig.13).

¹⁸Site No.61 MLK of Naz Sardar (2021:192)



and

Fig.12. View of images of stupa and animals on the surface of rock, Jamu Gatta site



Fig.13. View of images horse depicted the surface of rock, Gatta site

rider on
Jamu

Floral Motifs

18. Mehrab-Gat, Koza-Bazdara¹⁹

The painted rock at Palo Tull has situated on the north of village Koza Bazdara. This oval-shaped rock piece has a height of about 10 meters and wide, about 4 meters. The concave part depicted with floral and some geometrical designs in red colour. The local stated that there were painted Buddha images alongside the floral designs, which have now washed away.

19. Ghokhto-Tangai²⁰

The site of Ghokhto-Tangai has situated to the west of Wacha-Dara village on palai road. The floral design vertically illustrated on a two meters area (fig.14).



Fig.14. Floral paintings on the rock with white colour

¹⁹Site No.57 MLK of Naz and Sardar (2021:192)

²⁰Site No.82 MLK of Naz and Sardar (2021:194)

Unidentified Figures

20. Sra-Gatta, Bazdara Palai ²¹

About two kilometres in the north of Bazdara village, this painted shelter has located. The shelter's depth is 4 meters, and the width is 3.5 meters. The surface of the cover represents goats and geometrical designs in red colour.

Petroglyphs

All the rock carvings have depicted on the surface of the enormous rock or boulders. These petroglyphs reflect the Socio-cultural trends prevailing in different periods of history in the great Buddhist Cultural spheres like the Gandhara region, Central Asia, Tibet and China (Beninenn 1997; 1998). Pre-historic petroglyphs found in Swat by G. Tucci in 1955 depicted wild and domestic animals and anthropomorphic representations (Tucci 1958: 291-92). The local defaced mostly carvings, and some were overlapping by modern carvings. The carvings also comprise some unidentified inscriptions and modern names of local. Thousands of Rock Carvings of pre-historic time have been discovered so far in many Gandhara regions, i.e. Swat, Bajaur, Buner, Malakand, Dir (Ashfaq, S. M. 2005: 181-197). During the last few decades, mainly by Italian Scholars and Pakistani archaeologists in collaboration with the Department of Archaeology and Museums Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, University of Peshawar and the Federal department of Archaeology and Museums. These rock carvings are usually found on the boulders of different geological formations, wherever they were conveniently visible to the travellers (Khan, M. N. 1997:35-45). In the present research the following petroglyphs categories have recorded:

²¹Site No.59 MLK of Naz and Sardar (2021:192)

Human mask and footprint

21. Sartor Baba-I²²

Sartor Baba-I located south of Shahkot and to the North of Zalum Kot. The site has covered 200m in width and 100m in length. The area has carried the remains of rock carvings human mask impression of 10cm has sketched on the surface of the rock (fig.15). 10cm carved shoe mark or footprint and a square hole on the surface of the rock (fig.16, 17).

Fig.15.
carved
human mask
rock surface
Sartor Baba-



on the
at
I

Fig.16.
Carved foot
impression on
rock surface
Sartor Baba-I



Fig.17. Close
view of a
square hole

rock at Sartor Baba-I

22. Bazdara Kandao-I Palai²³

The carvings have situated in the mountain pass linked with Bazdara/ Mora Banda and can approach the village's metaled roadway. The dimension of rock is 4 meters in length, 6 meters in height and 4.5meters in width. The carving presents a horseman and a few graphic patterns, which have mainly wipe out. The area residents re-incise their titles and efface the original carvings.

²²Site No.7MLK of Naz and Sardar (2021:188)

²³Site No.66 MLK of Naz and Sardar (2021:193)

Geometrical and floral design

23. Karapa, Peranra Tangai-I²⁴

The site has located to the East of Peranra village. The (Thangai) pedestrian path can approach the site. The surface of the rock illustrate with two floral designs; one is a complete flower with five petals(fig.18) and a leaf with a pot (fig.19) the other one is a leaf with an oval shape like design.

Fig.18. Floral design Carving, Karapa, Peranra Tangai-I Site



Fig.19.
carvings,
Karapa,
Peranra
Tangai-I

²⁴Site
No.8MLK

the
at

up
on a

Leaf

Site

of

Naz and Sardar (2021:188)

24. Bazdara Kandao-II Palai²⁵

The carvings have situated in the mountain pass linked with Bazdara/ Mora Banda and can approach the village's metaled roadway. The rock's surface appears with different geometric designs: square box, star shapes, and lines drawn in swastika design

Cup-Marks

Cup-Marks found in various sites, particularly in district Malakand with similar environmental contexts like swat, Buner, Dir on the top of mid-slope cliffs or important shallows. Most of the cup-marks associated with painted shelters (Olivieri, L. M., & Vidale, M. 2004: 121-180). The uses of cup-marks expression on boulders have different; some have considered cults; some were for grinding and diluting pigments.

25. China-Kandaro II²⁶

China-Kandaro cup-marked boulders have situated on the east side of village Nal. The area of the site is approximately 200meters. There are eleven giant boulder stones bearing cup marks. Details of cup marks recorded on various rocks are:

1. 3-inch diameter, deepness 2 inches
2. 5-inch diameter, deepness 2 inches
3. 5-inch diameter, deepness 2 inches
4. 5-inch diameter, deepness 2 inches
5. 6-inch diameter, deepness 2 inches
6. 5-inch diameter, deepness 2.5 inches
7. 4-inch diameter, deepness 2 inches
8. 7-inch diameter, deepness 2 inches
9. Small cup marks 15 in number in rows on a long slab of 20 ft (Fig.20).
10. 11-inch diameter, deepness 5 inches (on the gigantic boulder of 15-16 ft (Fig.21).

²⁵Site No.66MLK of Naz and Sardar (2021:193)

²⁶Site No.23MLK of Naz and Sardar (2021:189)



Fig.20.Cup on the rock surface at Kandaro-II

Marks
China

Fig.21. Cup Marks on the rock surface at China Kandaro-II

26. Naray Tangay²⁷

The site has located about 100m on the west of village Wacha-Dara (Palai) which can be reached by travelling on a small narrow branch from the main Palai road. The site area's nature is mountainous and a huge flat rock with 15 shallow cup marks.

²⁷Site No.81MLK of Naz and Sardar (2021:194)

27. Deewana – Baba shelter²⁸

Near the tomb of Deewana Baba, the cup-marks have located in the area of Koza Bazdara. Twenty-four big and small cup marks, marked on a large boulder—the rock measured as 3meters in length, 2.5 meters in height and 1.8 meters in width (fig.22,23).



Fig.22. Three marks in a line on the rock surface at the Deewana site

cup-on
Baba



Fig.123. Cup-Mark on the surface of a rock at Deewana Baba shrine

rock

²⁸Site No.70MLK of Naz and Sardar (2021:193)

28. Ghalo-Tangay cave-I, Palai²⁹

The cave has situated to the west of Palai road. The cave's depth is about 7 meters; the width is approximately 6.5 metres and the entrance about 2.5 metres. Outside the cave, a cup-mark has also reported on the surface of a rock (Fig.24).



Fig.24.Single-cup mark at Ghalo Tangai Cave-I

Wine Presses

Wine Presses were also part of the communities that existed in the past. Besides paintings, cup marks and wine presses have also recorded from the rock surface.

29. Janu-Jaba Sites³⁰

The site has located on the SE of Nalo village. Two wine presses or rock-cut basins have also reported. Both wine presses have located in the southwest area of the site, separated by a small distance, a vast sandstone rock studded with partially broken many significant size cup marks, a tank-like structure and interconnectivity channels leading from cup mark structures to a tank (fig.25). A sign of tanks appearing shows that the wines after accumulated in the cup- marks have collected in these tanks (fig.26). The rock is not in good condition, and all cup marks and tanks have weathered (fig.27).

²⁹Site No.75MLK of Naz and Sardar (2021:193)

³⁰Site No.24MLK of Naz and Sardar (2021:189)

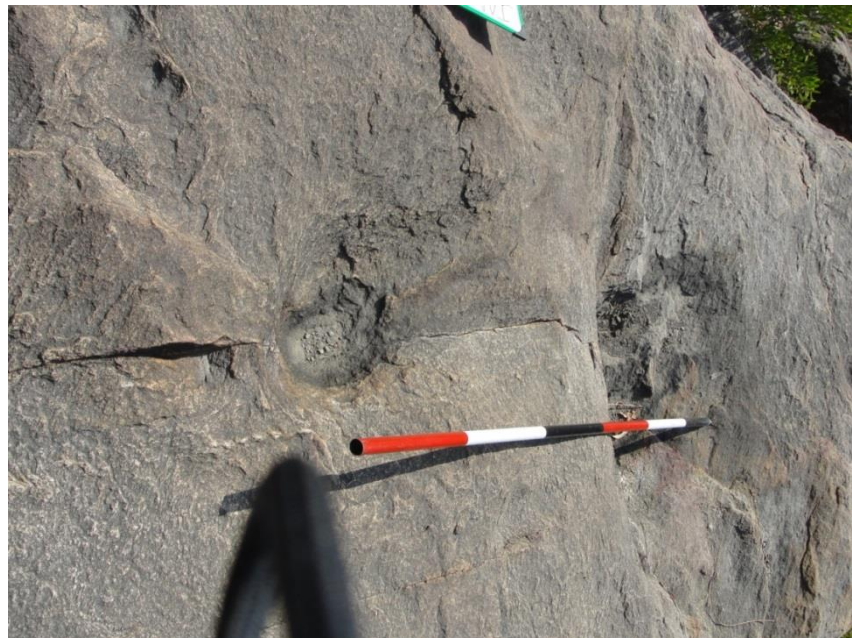


Fig.25. Cup-mark
Wine presser at Janu
site

and
Jaba



Fig.26. Cup-mark Wine presser at Janu

and Jaba site



Fig.27. boulder the Janu Jaba

Cup-marks exposed to weather at site

Summary

The above discussion has shown that the Malakand district has a significant cultural heritage. The whole region has witnessed various civilisations of the past. Among the settlement structure sites, the Malakand in the Gandhara region and the whole Northern areas of Pakistan are abundant with rock art. Rock carvings and rock paintings from the high mountains to the plains are the stories tellers of the past culture. However, the discovery of stone points and the common depiction of wild animals such as ibex, as well as humans with bows and arrows, suggest that the localities were used as seasonal hunting grounds.

This research was an attempt to explore more rock art sites in said region. More than a few rock art sites have deteriorated due to weathering and human vandalism. Some of the paintings and carvings have defaced by the residents. The paintings and carvings on the rock surface have born not only pre-historic but also contemporary Buddhist period art. These paintings have witnessed that not only Gandharan sculpture art have vital but the school of paintings was also active. These paintings are on the edge of vanishing and need proper attention by the concerned authorities. The major threats to these paintings are humidity, rainwater, sun heat, erosion or decaying of rocks and human. However, the recent exploration revealed that still many rock art sites are in good condition and needs to preserve for our future generations.