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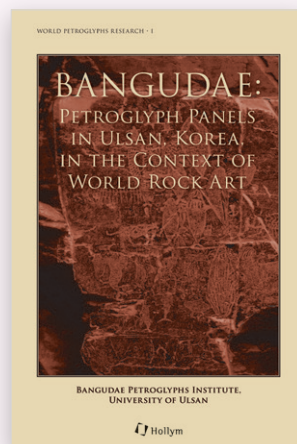
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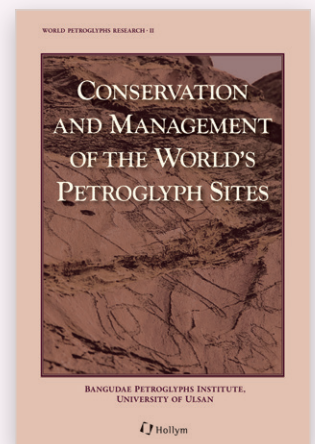
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The Petroglyphs of Cheonjeon-ri are unique as prehistoric, and historic period fine-line engravings, and textual inscriptions. The chapters of this book offer a detailed exploration and analysis of the petroglyphs and texts at the Cheonjeon-ri site from a wide variety of aspects, while placing them within the broader context of the prehistoric rock art found in other parts of the globe.

Third book in the WORLD PETROGLYPHS RESEARCH series. The previous two volumes are also available ▶▶



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Petroglyphs of Cheonjeon-ri in Ulsan, Korea, in the Context of World Rock Art

by Bangudae Petroglyphs Institute, University of Ulsan

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Considered to be masterpieces of prehistoric art and an invaluable source of prehistoric information, 304 representations are present, of which 166 figures are animals and 108 are unidentified motifs. Human figures are either side views of the whole body or frontal with mask-like faces and limbs akimbo. There are engravings of people hunting with a bow, raising their hands, and playing a rod-like musical instrument, recalling hunting and religious ritual.

There are engravings of people hunting with a bow, raising their hands, and playing a rod-like musical instrument, recalling hunting and religious ritual.

Bangudae Petroglyphs Institute of the University of Ulsan in the Southeast of Korea was established in 2010 to study both domestic and foreign petroglyph sites, including the Bangudae petroglyphs themselves, made over the course of 4,000 years, between 7,500 and 3,500 years ago.

The Institute is also tasked with researching case studies into the conservation and management of rock art.

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Fig. 1. A full view of the Cheonjeon-ri Petroglyphs (Jeon et al. 2014)

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The embedded religious elements in the images of animals were analyzed in Table 1.

Table 1. Thematic analysis of religious elements in the images of animals

Form	Theme	Number	Motifs	Religious elements
Individual		102	3 Ferret, 3 Canines, 26 Felines, 7 Hogs, 24 Deer, 6 Mountain goats, 2 Birds, 1 Snake, 3 Whales, 3 Fish	Game reproduction, Embedded hunting ritual
Group	Fight	6	6 Deer (3 pairs)	Mating competition, Reproduction ritual
	Pair	8	8 Deer (4 pairs)	Amorous activity, Reproduction ritual
	Mating	6	2 Canines (1 pair), 4 Felines (2 pairs)	Reproductive activity, Reproduction ritual
	Family	65	3 Canines (1 family), 32 Felines (12 families), 26 Deer (13 families), 2 Whales (1 family)	Reproduction, Increasing food source and prosperity.
	Herd	37 (16)	37 Deer (3 Herds)	
	Hunting Images	31 (6)	5 Felines, 1 Hog, 18 Deers, 1 Mountain Goat, 6 Hunters (4 Wearing animal skin or mask)	Hunter-shaman, Reproductive activity, Reproduction rituals
Ritual Images	24	21 Deer (1 Herd), 3 Shamans or spirits (1 shaman dressed as a bear)		
Total		233	21 Images of 37 reproduction images and 25 images of 31 hunting images overlap	A ritual asking for reproduction and prosperity

Religious Consciousness Reflected in the Images

To identify the religious faith embedded in the petroglyphs, we first have to select images with religious tendencies. Every petroglyph tends to serve religious rather than purely artistic purposes, reflecting human wishes to solve certain problems by beseeching the help of gods and spirits. From such a point of view, petroglyphs are perhaps the most valuable material in understanding the religious faith and the world view of prehistoric people. To discuss religion and petroglyphs, we must extract the religious elements from each type of picture and categorize them to analyze the characteristics.

1) Animals




Fig. 2. An animal engraving from the Cheonjeon-ri Petroglyphs (Jeon et al. 2014)

Images of animals are primarily related to productivity in hunting and fishing. Thus, behind the creation of such images lie hopes for securing a food source. Before hunting, people would ask a divinity, the master of food sources (animals), for permission and success, and when the hunt is successful, they would offer thanks to the divinity through a religious ceremony. Petroglyphs are products of such religious ceremonies.

© Fights

There are three pairs of fighting deer images. The contents of the images, as mentioned in Table 1, are of fights between males competing for a female in heat. Such scenes of typical natural competition are ritual pictures meant to encourage animal reproduction. In other words, they are scenes of offering a ritual ceremony to the mountain god, asking for the maintenance of a healthy ecosystem and fecundity of its animal population. (Jang 2001: 133-139; Eveline Lot Folk 1980: 46-50; Seo 1992: 74).

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Fig. 3. Fighting scene from the animal engravings (Jeon et al. 2014)

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© Pairs

Among the deer images, there are four pairs of male and female deer facing each other or rubbing their heads together amorously. Such images reflect human wishes for animal fecundity and suggest that ritual ceremonies were conducted to stimulate such natural abundance.

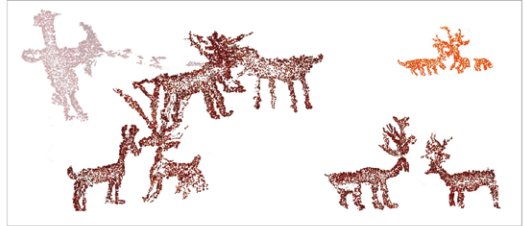


Fig. 4. Pairs of animals from animal engravings (Jeon et al. 2014)

© Animals Mating

There are a pair of canines, a pair of wild cats, and a pair of tigers. In each image, the male and female animals are engaged in amorous activities. Such images also reflect the ritual nature and the people's wishes for abundant game.




Fig. 5. Animals mating from animal engravings (Jeon et al. 2014)

© Families

There are a total of 27 families of 65 animals, including 1 family of 3 canines, 12 families of 32 tigers, 13 families of 28 deer, and 1 family of 2 whales. These pictures comprise mother and child images made of two animals and family images made of more than three animals. Such images focus on familial love and reproduction. Needless to say, these are ritual images reflecting a hope for natural fecundity and abundant game. From this group, the following three are noteworthy.

A majority (64.4%) of the images of reproduction are of families. Tigers compose nearly half of the images of families (49.2%). There is also an image of a whale mother and her pup.

To explain the first, it may be said that families are the basic units of ecosystems and symbols of reproduction. The dominance of familial images can be seen as the natural outcome of a desire for the stable prosperity of the society.

It is harder to understand the second as tigers are predators that are not sources of meat for humans. Rather, they are sources of social insecurity as the increase in their numbers would multiply the threat to humans. Some possibilities are that such images reflected the demand for tiger pelts as symbolic items of social power or for trade with neighboring regions or served as ritual defense against tiger attacks. There is no sufficient explanation for the abundance of images of tigers. This is also the case of the Bangudae Petroglyphs.

As for the image of a mother whale and pup, its ritual purpose seems no different than those of other land mammals. However, its relation to the Bangudae Petroglyphs is intriguing.




Fig. 6. Images of families among the animal engravings (Jeon et al. 2014)