

Echoes of the Desert: Figurative Narratives in Safaitic Heritage from Jordan's Badiya

Professor Dr. Mahdi Alzoubi

Queen Rania Faculty for Tourism and Heritage
The Hashemite University-Jordan
mahdi@hu.edu.jo

Petroglyphs are considered as a direct source of information about the Pre-Islamic Safaitic tribes inhabitants the North-Eastern Bādiya of Jordan, during the period of the first century BC. till the fourth century AD., specifically their culture and society.

Apart from the inscriptions and drawings, very little is known about the culture of the Pre-Islamic Safaitic people in the Black Desert at North-Eastern Bādiya of Jordan; the few undertaken excavations do not say a lot. Such rock art compensates for that gap through providing historians and epigraphists with significant data in order to reach a better understanding of the culture of the ancient Safaitic tribes in the Black Desert of Jordan.

These Petroglyphs, depict an array of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic motifs, ranging from wild and domestic animals, such as lions, hyenas, Oryxes, Horses, Goats, Gazelles and camels, to anthropomorphic figures, such as women, swordsmen, dancing, erotic, hunting and conflict scenes. Many of these are with high artistic value, display sequences that provide a unique testimony to the changing socio-economic base of the area from hunter-gatherer to agro-pastoralist. Some of the petroglyphs reflect beliefs, rituals and cosmological traditions of the ancient inhabitants of the region. The basalt-covered desert holds a fascinating phenomenon: a vast amount of rock art with intriguing variations, patterns, and complexities, which suggest that the ancient societies of the Black Desert left their cultural mark on what is commonly considered an ecologically marginal landscape.

These recovered ancient Petroglyphs show life once flourished in Jordan's Black Desert. They tell us about the time when the now-desolate landscape was teeming with life.