

EXPLORING NEW FINDINGS AT BATHISTAL CAVE IN SUID DACHHAN, KISHTWAR

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ABSTRACT

During the 1920s a Brahmi Inscription was found by R C Kak, from a cave prevalently known as Bathistal cave, situated at Suid Dachhan, District Kishtwar, Jammu, and Kashmir. It was an important discovery of the Brahmi inscription in District Kishtwar of the Jammu region. The numbers and typology of those characters are too exhaustive to be in any way unraveled and assessed in detail and even today the connections and associations couldn't be appropriately made among these characters. R C Kak in his research emphasized that these characters belong to the 3rd Century AD, some belong to the 5th Century AD and few characters belong to the later period. The typology of these characters is so rich that only a few characters painted on the ceilings of that cave got deciphered and evaluated during the research of Kak.

This cave is of great historical significance, as it embodied an important source of archeological study i.e. it has painted as well as carved inscriptions and symbols. On my first and very recent visit to that coveted site, I made a well-detailed observation of the whole cave with the multipronged approach, and subsequently, I got some important findings that R C Kak couldn't manage to establish. On one side of the cave very close to its base there are carved inscriptions, some characters made of red ochre, few symbols, rock paintings, and some unintelligible carved symbols and characters were noticed. The present paper will discuss some new findings at Bathistal cave and the rock paintings near Bathistal.

KEYWORDS

Bathistal, Cave inscription, Paintings, Symbols, Kunti Mata, Dachhan, Kishtwar

1. INTRODUCTION

The inscriptions are one of the significant methods for authentic investigations. Inferable from the lack and insufficiency of writing these engravings became imperative and basic sources to contemplate, to uncover, and to remake the crude societies, customs, and civic establishments of the world. Engravings on stones, plates, rocks, coins, columns, and so on assisted us with comprehension and get point by point information on country, economy, geology, culture, strict convictions, occasions, and so on of different human advancements of various occasions. Engravings are cross-checked to in real sense sources and assist us with remaking a target investigation of a specific period or area.

In the Indian sub-continent, the Archeological Survey of India identified various epigraphs that help us to reconstruct or reveal the history of our past. So far as Inscription of Jammu is concerned the 'Shankha lipi' inscriptions from Akhnoor and Bhadarwah are to be seen in the light of the earliest available inscriptions in the Jammu region. Although no pillar or Ashoka rock edicts have been discovered in Jammu and Kashmir, yet the earliest available Brahmi inscription in the Jammu region made a crystal clear linkage of Jammu with the rich cultural accomplishments of pan-India. So far as the Brahmi inscriptions established in the Jammu region

is concerned some peculiar sites embodied the Bhrami inscriptions. Among these sites, inscriptions of Bathistal (Balastal) Cave in Suid Dachhan Kishtwar, depicts the post-Mauryan Brahmi Inscription which was first noticed by R C Kak in 1921, the then prime minister of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir and an archaeologist of repute. He mentioned the Bathistal cave inscription as one of the oldest (Dated between the 3rd to 5th centuries) Brahmi inscriptions in the Jammu region (Gupta, 2015)

Epigraphist like B K Kaul Dembi have set and contrasted Bathastal cave engraving and coins of Indo-Bactrian rulers Agathocles and Pantaleon, Rock engraving of Khanihara, close to Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh, and Inscription of Kshatrapa King Sodasa, and all these shaped the piece of the Post-Mauryan Inscription gathering of 184 BCE to the start of Christian time (Deambi, 1982, p. 8).

2. GEOGRAPHY

The Bathistal cave is situated in Tehsil Dachhan of district Kishtwar. Kishtwar is located in the North-East region of Jammu and Kashmir UT, with coordinates as 33.312683°N and 75.76944°E. Dachhan lies in the western region of District Kishtwar. On the north side of Tehsil Dachhan, very close to village Suid, Bathistal cave comes on a path enrooted to Hudh Mata Trisandhya Holly Shrine. The cave inscription, 'Bathistal' is on a big boulder on a small hillock on the North of Suid and is situated on the bank of stream Dhunagrad, the tributary of Anant Nalla River. Bathistal is a local word, which literary means, beneath the hill. R C Kak calls it Balastal which means 'below the sky'. Bathistal is a long, shallow, natural grotto formed by the erosion of large masses from the face of a rocky ledge by the action of frost, but it is probable that for many centuries past its appearance has been much the same as it is now (Kak, 1924, p. 25).

3. EARLIER FINDINGS OF BATHISTAL CAVE

Bathistal cave engraving causes us to uncover the antiquated lost history in Dachhan. The cavern engraving was first seen and assessed by R. C Kak in 1921. As indicated by him countless Brahmi character accessible from the roof of Bathistal cavern engraving in different style presumably have a place with various occasions, These characters, subsequently, have the differentiation of being the most punctual examples of Brahmi composing so far found in Jammu and Kashmir, and as such are of uncommon paleogeographical esteem (Kak, 1924, pp. 25-26).

The Brahmi character painted in whitish color on the roofs of the cave give great proof of confirmation or presence of a nearby association among Kashmir and the terrain of India, through Jammu mountains district, in the second - fifth hundreds of years of the Christian period, of which we knew from archaeological sources. Unexpectedly, they likewise delineate the degree of this association. On the off chance that remnants of Brahmi engraving are found in a particularly far off and unavailable spot as that of Suid Dachhan, their bounty in the valley of Kashmir itself can be effectively be guessed (Kaul, 2001, p. 55).

R C Kak's soonest assessed arrangement appears to have been written in dull red ochre. The characters are straight, little, and flawlessly composed. The best example of this style is the faintly obvious expression 'Sachasamaya'.

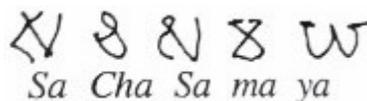


Plate-1 Specimens of Bathistal cave Inscription Suid Dachhan, Kishtwar (Kak, 1924, p. 26).

It will instantly be observed that the forms of letters are exactly those illustrated in Bulhars's Paleographic (table No. II), which he prepared from the Kusan Brahmi inscription. The Triplicate 'yaa and ma' with its two arms crossed in the middle and joined at the base by a horizontal, is like that of Kushan Brahmi Inscription. This evidentially provides evidence of Kushan's influence in the Jammu mountainous region. (Kaul, 2001, p. 55)

Next after these and partly written over them, follows a series of moderately cursive Characters written in white or dull yellow color. Of the best example are the two identical groups.



Plate-II Specimens of Bathistal cave Inscription Suid Dachhan, Kishtwar (Kak, 1924, p. 26)

Dr. Deambi has offered no remark on the Bathistal cave engraving aside from putting and contrasting it with the coins of Indo-Grecian King Agathocles and Pantaleon. (Deambi, 1982, p. 6) Kanihara Rock Inscription and engraving of Khytapa lord Sodasa, all having a place with Post Mauryan Group of 184 B.C to the start of Christian time. Presently the post Mauryan Period throughout the entire existence of North-Western India was overwhelmed by Indo Greek kings with their capital at Sakla (Sialkot) so close to Kishtwar. Once more, an incredible socio-religious contact between the Indo-Greek King Menander and Nag-Sen, an extraordinary holy person, and researcher from kishtwar has been set up by the creator in his work Nag Sen of Milind Panho. The overall attribute of this gathering of engraving for example triangular wedges, serifs, and nail head and cursive structure happen in the Bathistal engraving additionally and thus the hour of the engraving having a place with the first and second century B.C is by all accounts very right. In any case, the other tedious compositions in cursive style may have a place with the later hundreds of years (Kaul, 2001, p. 9)

Even though the composition of Bathistal or Balastal cave engraving doesn't draw out any justifiable strict significance, yet it has an extraordinary verifiable and social worth. As per legend, the writing in this cavern contains the tale of the marriage of Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas. (Kak, 1924, p. 27)

4. NEW FINDINGS OF BATHISTAL CAVE

The less documentation of the site can be seen clearly when only a few Brahmi characters painted on the ceilings of the cave in Dark red Ochre and white or dull yellow color, were evaluated. I found this site by a chance, which attracts my attention. After that, I focused on literal shreds of evidence about the area and particularly about this site, where I found that R C Kak has left so many things unnoticed in Bathistal Cave. On the lower side, very close to the basement of the cave a short inscription in dark red ochre color was engraved with some Brahmi character and symbol. After the analysis of ceiling characters by R C Kak, we can say that these newly identified characters on the lower side of the cave might belong to post Mauryan groups of inscriptions. Most of the character seems to be faded so it's hard to analyze but few of the petroglyph tell me they largely use Dark red Ochre, white and dull yellow color.

R C Kak has noticed and evaluated only a few Bhamni characters (Plate-1 and Plate-II) painting on the ceilings of the cave. The whole cave ceiling is painted with a different character in which most of them are faded. The ceiling of the cave is painted with Cursive characters written in which white and dull yellow colors (Spooner, 1924, p. 93). There is no uniformity in these characters; probability is that it may belong to different periods. On the basement of the cave,

there are inscriptions, few characters, and an unidentified symbol. The unidentified character is a written form that is not currently understood. The inscription is arranged with two lines and it around 3 feet in length and 2.8 feet in breadth carved with red ochre color in the basement of the cave. Apart from the Cave inscription there few other symbols and characters written on the basement of the cave whose most part are faded.



Figure-1 Bathistal cave



Figure-II ceiling of Bathistal Cave



Figure No- III



Figure No- IV



Figure No- V



Figure No- VI



Figure No- VII

Figure No- III, IV, V, VI, VII Parts of Ceiling Inscriptions of Bathistal Cave in Suid Dachhan



Figure No-VIII



Figure No-IX



Figure No-X

Figure No VIII, IX, X, Faded inscription of Bathistal Cave in Suid Dachhan

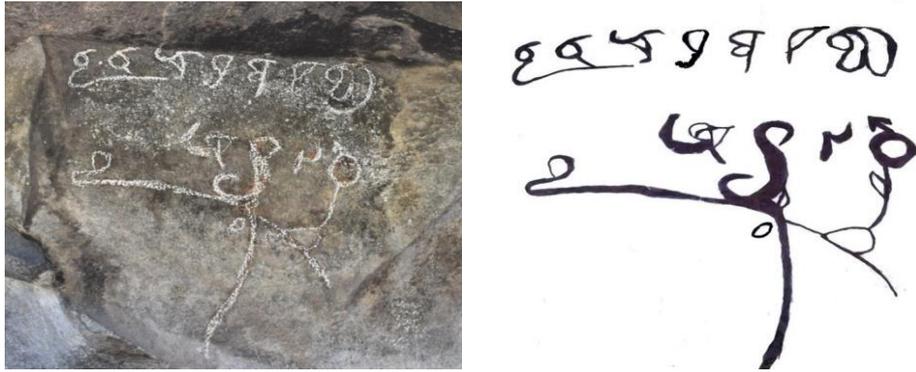


Figure No- XI Inscription on Bathistal Cave (length 3feets & Breadth 2.8 feet's)



Figure No- XII- Few other characters on Bathistal Cave



Figure No- XIII Unidentified symbol on Bathistal cave



Figure No-XIV, Basement inscription. Some Characters & unidentified symbol

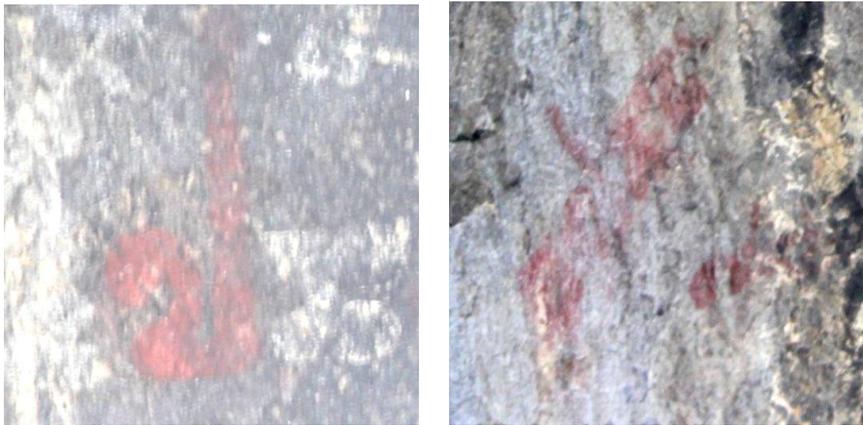


Figure No- XV, XVI Rock painting inside Bathisthal Cave Suid Dachhan

Although the writings of Balastal or Bathistal cave inscription do not bring out any understandable literal meaning, yet it has great historical and cultural values. As per popular traditions, Bathistal or Balastal cave inscription narrates the story of 'Kunts' marriage. P K Kaul believes that the story may not be true, but the traditional and Brahmi characters about the cave in Suid Dachhan and Gupta Ganga cave of Bhaderwah, are almost similar but have a difference in timings (Kaul, 2001, p. 56).

5. ROCK PAINTING NEAR BATHISTAL

Rock art is a global phenomenon. Painting and drawing on rocks and caves go back to prehistoric times throughout India in different geographical, geological, and climatic zones, mostly in the area of metamorphic, sedimentary, and igneous rocks. These sites are generally founded on hill slopes, plateaus, and tops, in the gorges and valley having caves, rock shelters, and open rock. In Jammu and Kashmir, a couple of rock art destinations have been found at this point and are situated at low mountains environmental living spaces, lithic geological twists, and low mountains street and now and then close to the stream and needs

According to R C Kak near the mouth of the cave, a fine hand in red ochre with long thin fingers stands painted and is said to be that of Kunt, the mother of Pandavas. While observing we don't find such types of symbols there. I find such a type of rock art at a distance of half km from Bathistal cave. The place where rock art is found is locally known as Kunt Majun Hatha which means Hand of Kunti Maa, the mother of Pandavas. There are so many symbols; some of them are faded but some still survive. On the bottom of the Rock, there is an unidentified symbol; Goat, feet, and hand, and most of the symbols on the rock are faded. These paintings give the religious significance of the area.



Fig. No- XVI Rock Painting: unidentified symbol and Goat Fig. No- XVII Rock Painting –Hand



Figure No- XVIII Feet



Figure No- XIX Square symbol

From ancient times Kishtwar was referred to in Vedas and Mahabharata epic. In Rig Veda's Nadi Sukta songs we discover notice of the stream and valley of Marutvratha (Marwah of Kishtwar) (Kaul, 2001, p. 4). River Marutvratha originated from Bhou kool glacier and at pohar, it joined Anant Nallah River, later on, it's become part of River Chenab at Bhandarkot. In the 27th Chapter of Sabha Parva Mahabharata, Part 1 mentioned Lohit Mandal. In Sanskrit, Lohit means saffron and Mandal means a canton. Kishtwar one of the parts of the eleven states in Divigrit and no other state in Divigrit had saffron development. Hence the reference is without a doubt about Kishtwar (Sharma, 1995, pp. 22-23).

The mystical atmosphere of the Dachhan-Marwah may have unquestionably charmed the old Rishis to sit inside for intercession. It has now become a recognized truth that few such sorts of Caves exist in Dachhan and Marwa. They lived in them and compiled some part of Rig Veda and Atharva Veda. The Bathistal inscription may be one of such cave, (Sharma, 1995, pp. 22-23) and the rock painting near Bathistal may be giving the religious significance of the area. On the bases of folklore, local of that region has given much importance to these symbols because of Kunti Maa. The emergence of Pandavas in Dachhan is known through these folklores. Surrounding areas near Bathistal are named in the memory of Pandavas and some names dedicated to Rishis i.e Rishis Kouth, Pandav Daigan, Bhimun Chawon, Bhimun Dound, Bhimun Chawor, and a large number of Pandavas caves in the Marwah-Warwan region of Kishtwar.

CONCLUSION

From epic times Kishtwar comes into the spotlight due to authentic and social qualities. We discover proof of Kishtwar in Vedas and Mahabharata. A few antiquarians are of the view that a few pieces of Atharva Vedas are written in the backwoods of Dachhan and Marwah because these are mysterious environments and accessibility of woods assets. Enormous quantities of caves have been found in these areas, the scene and enchanted environment of the region appealed the antiquated Rishis to sit for contemplation and aggregated a few pieces of Vedas. The Bathistal or Balastal cave might be one such cave. In the 1920's the disclosure of the Bathistal cave inscription by R C Kak at Suid Dachhan, Kishtwar makes another section throughout the entire existence of Dachhan Kishtwar. R C Kak investigates the ceiling inscription of this cave however as a part of the ceiling inscription, there are great deals of different things that stay neglected. In the Bathistal cave, there is a ceiling inscription which was painted in white and dull yellow color; different engravings are over the ground on the cellar of the cave, some character, symbols, and some ocher red shading compositions. The roof engraving, engraving, characters, and images of the cave have a place with the various gatherings and various occasions. Shockingly, it is beyond the realm of imagination to expect to associate these gatherings because the individual gatherings are extremely hard to decipher.

Hundred years after the discovery of the Bathistal cave neither the Archeological Survey of India nor any epigraphist/archeologist tries to explore this historical cave. So yet the Bathistal cave inscription does not bring understandable literal meaning but it has great historical and cultural values. Near Bathistal cave there are rock paintings of ocher red color of hand, feet's, goat, square symbol, some unidentified symbol, and some faded symbols. These symbols are carved on a rock, but still, the exact purpose was not known. In light of folklore, these paintings are known as 'the Kunti Mata' mother of Pandavas (locally known as Kunt Majun Hatha means hands of Kunti Mata). Historical writing in caves fills in as essential proof for historians and should be viewed as a significant social legacy. There is the requirement of proper documentation of the cave engraving, to know the appropriate artistic importance of cavern engraving. I suggest the cave inscription should be deciphered and cleaning should be done only after thorough documentation of the area and enter it into the historical monuments.

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