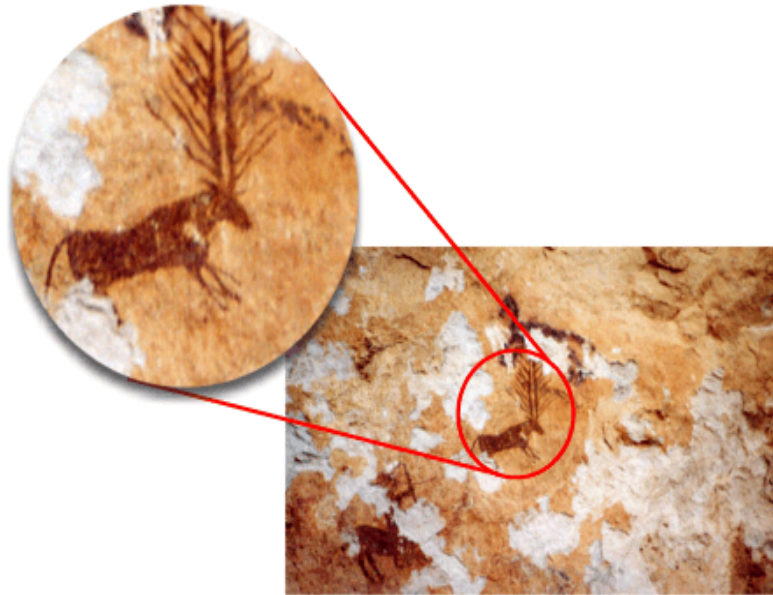


## Iranians Were Artists 42,000 Years Ago



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When I was conducting research on my upcoming book "Iran & America: Rekindling A Love Lost", I came across an astonishing piece of information. In a book entitled *Persia: An Archeological Guide*, written by Sylvia A. Matheson and published in London by Farber & Farber in 1976, the author wrote: "Recent surveys in the Kuh Dasht area of Lorestan, west of Khorramabad, by various archeologists including Hamid Izadpanah, Dr. C. B. M. McBurney (of Cambridge University) and Dr. Clare Goff, have revealed cave paintings dating from about 40,000 B.C. They are believed to be the known examples between the Mediterranean and the Indian Peninsula and have been compared to those of Spain."

As no pictures had been made available, I took a trip to Iran last July where, with the help of the Iran Cultural Heritage Organization staff, I found the paintings. The artwork is located near the peak of a mountain of over 6,500 feet. There appeared to be two different types of drawings in reddish brown and purple color. A human being with extended arms, a tree and a deer are among the brown drawings. The animal images are often very good, naturalistic representations of single animals, but the human image is very schematic. The purple ones, which depict men riding horses, are also schematic and must be younger as scholars believe man tamed horses about 10,000 years ago.

The drawings are particularly significant in the sense that they provide proof that dwellers of Iran had developed an artistic sense about forty two thousand years ago.

Traditionally, the study of prehistoric art has meant the study of prehistoric art in Europe, especially in southwest France and northern Spain where cave art dates from 35,000 to 10,000 years ago. My hope is that this article will generate a new interest in scholars, universities, art institutions and individuals of means to embark on a concerted and unbiased study on these paintings, which seem to be 7,000 years older than the ones in Europe, in order to gain some insight into the workings of the human mind at this point in our history.

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