Report on

Multidisciplinary Documentation of Rock Art and Its Allied Subjects in Kerala

IIIrd Phase
(13th -23rd May, 2018)
First phase of ‘Multidisciplinary Documentation of Rock Art and its Allied Subjects in Kerala’ was conducted in Wayanad district of Northern Kerala from 24th – 28th October 2015. The team documented Edakkal, Tovari and Kappikunnu / Veliyambam Kotta rock art sites and Megalithic monuments of the area.

The second phase of field documentation was conducted from 29th October to 3rd November, 2016 in the districts of Kasargod, Kannur, Palakkad and Ernakulam.

Third phase of field documentation was conducted from 13th to 23rd May, 2018 in the districts of Idukki, Kollam and Thiruvanthapuram. The team documented rock art sites, Megalithic monument and other associated cultural monuments from these districts.

I. Rock art sites

a) Idukki District

Rock art in this area was first reported by S P Thampi in 1975 by reporting the sites Ezhuthala, Attala and Chambakkad. Later years, more reporting were carried out by local peoples and researchers. Marayoor group is the only site in Kerala with paintings; pigments used more commonly are shades red ochre and white kaolin (commonly known as lime). From this region the following rock art sites, Megalithic monuments and other monuments were documented.

1. Aattala (N 10° 15’ 05.8” E 77° 08’ 19.4”)

The site is situated in the border of Munnar and Marayoor panchayat; Pallanad village in the west. The name ‘Attala’ means locally ‘shelter for goats’ and in regional language ‘aadu’ means ‘goat/sheep’ and ‘ala’ means ‘shelter’. The shelter measured around 50 m length 10 m wide, 3 m height. The paintings are executed in white kaolin. More than 100 paintings are seen at the roof of the shelter. Main motifs depicted are man riding elephant, animals, human engaging in different activities, anthropomorphic figures, fighting and ritual scene, plants, weapons, signs etc. Muthuva tribes settled in this area long ago.
2. **Alapatty** (N 10° 18’ 43.9” E 77° 11’ 11.7”)

   The site is located north of the present Champakkad tribal settlement. Local history suggests that a group of Malapulayas lived here in distant past. The name Alampatty means ‘shelter where people /cattle lives.’ A huge grinding stone and a huge pebble stone is found at the entrance of the shelter. All paintings are executed in white kaolin. Painting of exorcizing the ghosts locally known as *payee thullal* is the main depiction and some signs are also depicted at the site.

3. **Alampatty Odavayckal** (N 10° 18’ 43.9” E 77° 11’ 11.7”)

   This rock painting site is located around 500 m west of Alampatty Eco Tourism Centre, Chinnar wild life sanctuary, close to bedrock on the north bank of Alampatty *Odai*, a stream of Pambar. *Odai* in local language means stream. The paintings are executed in white kaolin. Depictions in the shelter are goats, thar, mangoes, human figures and scene of ritual dances. Figures are drawn in the lower parts of the shelter, but the cooking and other activities performed in the shelter have caused deterioration of the paintings.

4. **Athiyodakootuvaya** (N 10° 20’ 48.0” E 77° 14’ 12.4”)

   This site is located at the confluence of river Pambar and Athiyoda stream. The name refers to the mouth confluence of the both water bodies. Paintings are made of white kaolin to represent humans and some signs.
5. **Athiyoda stream bed petroglyph**
Athiyoda stream is situated in the middle of the present political boundary between Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The petroglyph is in a rock situated in the stream bed. The engravings are a mud terrapin and a human form standing nearby it. Megalithic cist burials are also noticed in both sides of the stream.

6. **Champakkad / Purachi ala (N 10º 19’ 18.9” E 77º 13’ 05.0”)**
This painting site is located opposite to Vaimalai in Kulukkala Mountain, south of Champakkad settlement, 1 km west of Chambakkad hamlet, 3 km west of Chinnar and 17 km from Marayoor. This shelter is locally known as Kulikala, Vavalala (shelter of bat) etc., and also Pulachikumattialai (shelter of Pulaya caste). This site was first reported by S. P. Tampi. Paintings are executed in white kaolin. Main depictions are group dancing, abstract figures and few symbols, animal rider, plants etc and a cup mark is also seen inside the shelter.

7. **Chemganperu (10° 15’ 23.9” N; 77° 10’ 19.1” E)**
Chemganperu is one of the famous dolmen sites in the Chinnar area, located about 2 km north of Chinnar forest office on the left side of Marayoor-Udumpelt road. In the northern side, single chambered dolmen has yielded paintings of human/ humanistic symbol similar to payee and some abstract motifs also noticed.

8. **Chinnavendu (N 10º 20’ 32.8” E 77º 11’ 30.4”)**
The cave is located 5 km west of Vedanala is one of the biggest caves in this region. The name Chinnavendu means ‘small fissure’. Most of the painting panels are lost due to weathering and only one panel is still left containing paintings. The paintings include the plantain plant with its lower bulb and harvesting the fruit with a long knife by a human on an animal probably buffalo.
9. **Jellymala** (N 10° 18.307' E 77° 11.303')
Two caves are located on the cliff of the mountain, around half km east of Maadathala. These shelters seem to be an oval shaped cavity.

9.1 Cave I
Cave is located west of the cliff, facing to the valley. The paintings are executed in white kaolin and red ochre colours. The paintings are geometrical designs, humans and animal motifs.
9.2 Cave II
Cave is located east of the cliff. The paintings were executed in red ochre. The paintings include a human holding an unidentifiable object and an animal is seen nearby probably a dog.

10. Ezhuthala or Pathipara (N 10° 15’ 40.00” E 77° 08’ 39.5”)
This site is located about 2.5 km west of Marayoor town, near Koodakkad settlement way inside Marayoor sandalwood reserve forest. Nearby tribal villages are Marayoor and Kammalamkudy Muthuva. The shelter is formed out from a huge granite rock resembling a cobra hood; because of it tribal people call this shelter ‘Pathipara’. The shelter opens to the west and is approachable from southern side. The shelter measures 14.5 m at the base. Paintings are executed mainly in red ochre and white kaolin is noticed in fewer amounts. Superimposition of the paintings is seen here in large numbers. Main depictions are three giant humans in red ochre with border, humans engaged in different activities, different poses of animals like cattle, sambar, deer, Nilgiri thar etc.
11. Kovilkadavu (N 10° 15’29.34” E 77° 10’ 8.28”)
This site is located inside the cervice on the northern side of the GHSS, Kovilkadavu. Three main scenes are noticed; an animal probably a bull and other figures are faded and difficult to identify. A figure similar to stretcher made of bamboo also seen.
12. Madathala (N 10° 18’36.11” E 77° 11’ 29.9”)
The site is located 1.5 km east of Aalampatty Eco-tourism centre. The cluster consists of two chambers found close by having red ochre paintings.

12.1 Shelter- I
The shelter is facing towards east, measures 15 m in length, 3 m in width and 3 m in height. Red ochre paintings in clusters are noticed in the shelter. The paintings include an animal similar to wild boar trapped in vine loop, two Sambar deer with a calf and faded painting which could not be identified.

12.2 Shelter- II
Located few meters south west of the shelter- I, measures 8 m in length, 3 m in width and 4 m in height. Shelter is facing towards east to Koppamthodu. The paintings are executed in the red colour. These include decorated female figure with its hands upwards, along with this a series of circular lines forming the shape of honey comb which looks the honey comb is hanging from the cliff are noticed. A lone figure of human in stick form and with an elaborate head, schematic figures of some aquatic species depicted, among which fish motif is clear and another figure is a semi curve-bulging body with a long projection similar to a fish seen from the top.
13. **Mandayotty mala (N 10° 18’ 30.7” E 77° 11’ 31.1”)**

It is located in the cliffy eastern side of the Jellimala mountain range at a distance around 1 km. Its name is originated from the local language Mandayotti means ‘skull’ and malai means ‘hill or mountain’ which stands for the ‘mountain that looks like a skull’. In a single rock more than 12 cavities in different shapes and sizes are found, among which from four cavities paintings are reported. The paintings were executed in red colour. The biggest chamber has a few red ochre lines drawn on the wall which look like tally mark. There are anthropomorphic figures with trident and a symbol like swastika seen.

![Mandayotty mala](image1)

14. **Masivayal paintings inside dolmen**

Few dolmens were reported near from Kanakkayam tribal settlement, Kanthalloor panchayath. White kaolin paintings were noticed inside a dolmen in naturalistic form. The depictions are of a human and an animal probably elephant.

![Masivayal paintings inside dolmen](image2)

15. **Nelimedu, Lockhart plantation (N 10° 04.100’ E 77° 06.958’)**

The engraving is located inside Lockhart plantation Devikulam taluk of Idukki district. The engravings are mainly of a leg print, circle with spikes and inside a symbolic human figure and a half moon symbol. A modern Malayalm inscription is also seen near by the motif.
16. **Nelthinathittu** (N 10° 19’ 18.6” E 77° 12’ 00.6”)
The site is located almost 2 km south of Vaimala, facing towards east; the shelter is accessible only through a rope. It is about 20 m long, 5 m wide and 6 m in height. Due to heavy weathering some of the panels are deteriorated and figures cannot identify. Some of the depictions identified are three schematic human figures, an outline drawing of an urn or big basket like object and a band type line on the top and bottom and also shows a support similar to hand is in the line, along with it different graffiti seen in the panel.

17. **Vaimala** (N 10° 19’ 13.9” E 77° 12’ 00.6”)
The site is located 2 km north of Aalampatty eco-tourism centre on the left side of the Marayoor-Chinnar road. There are two caves located in the cliff. Vai means ‘mouth’ and *mala* means ‘hill’.

17.1 **Cave -I**: The cave measures 8 m x 5 m x 3.5 m in length, width and height respectively. Palm print, honey comb design and some faded designs are depicted in red ochre in the cave.
17.2 Cave -II: This cave is few meters north of Cave-I. The paintings are seen on the roof and side walls of the cave. Two animal motifs seen on the ceiling, possibly Sambar doe and a calf; a criss-crossed ladder like painting is also noticed. In the northern side of the shelter some motifs are faintly visible, figures such as honey comb in a row, plant like symbol and some other designs are noticed.

18. Vedanala (N 10° 19’ 06.7” E 77° 11’ 33.9”)
The site is located 8 km North-west of Allampetti, in the northern part of Kombukkalu cliff of Karimala mountain range. The name come from Vedan means ‘hunter’ and ala means ‘cave/shelter’, which means the ‘shelter of hunters’. The paintings are executed in white kaolin. Paintings include various human activities including dancing and fighting, animals including its skeletal depictions. The animal form seems to be an ant eater.
19. Iruttala Upper (N 10° 17’ 89.1” E 77° 10’ 17.8”)
This site is situated in the protected forest region nearby Iruttala tribal settlement area in Marayoor. Depictions are very simple tally markings in black colour along with some modern drawings. These paintings are totally destroyed by modern lemon grass oil extractors, by cooking and firing inside this cave.

20. Iruttala Lower (N 10° 17’ 89.1” E 77° 10’ 17.8”)
This site is located in the protected forest region nearby Iruttala tribal settlement area in Marayoor, few meters down from the Iruttala Upper. Paintings are executed in white kaolin and few markings in black colour also. Depictions in the shelter are cattle and some inscriptions in Tamil; this seems to be a recent painting.

21. Madala/ Karimutty (N 10° 17’ 75.5” E 77° 10’ 60.7”)
The site is located in the protected forest region nearby Iruttala tribal settlement area in Marayoor. Locally this shelter is known for keeping cattle in the past. The paintings include some flower like motif, an anthropomorphic figure and square shaped motif similar to modern bus. All paintings are executed in white kaolin.

22. Mavala (N 10° 16’ 23.8” E 77° 12’ 37.2”)
Mavala is located inside the sandalwood reserve forest of Keezhanthoor village on a trek path which leads to Mavala from Vannanthura forest station. Two shelters are seen here in a parallel. Paintings are in simple form like tally marking, flowers(?) and some unidentified motifs executed in white kaolin.
23. Padavetty lower (N 10° 17’ 76.9” E 77° 10’ 60.3”)
The site is located inside reserve forest; a trek path leads to the site from Karimutty forest station. The depictions are modern period vehicles- cars, buses etc. with some human figures, executed in white kaolin. Along with this paintings a few disruptive drawings made of charcoal/black over the paintings are also seen.

24. Padavetty Upper (N 10° 17’ 51.6” E 77° 10’ 32.3”)
The site is located inside reserve forest; a trek path leads to the site from Karimutty forest station, upper part position of the Padavetty lower, by the side of a huge cliff. The paintings are of a few animal figures, executed in red ochre.

b). Kollam District

1. Tenmalai (N 08° 57’ 90.4” E 77° 04’ 41”)
In 1984, P Rajendran reported an engraved site in Tenmalai, Kollam district of southern Kerala. This engraving was found in the outer wall of the shelter; the engravings are cross-hatchings patterns. Microlithic implements were reported at the surface and also stratified context from this shelter. Wood charcoals recovered from the three strata recorded C-14 dates of 5120±120, 5210±110 and 4420±110 YBP respectively. This kind of first absolute date for Stone Age cultures recovered from Kerala or in south India but also first dates for any Indian coastal Mesolithic industry.
c). Thiruvananthapuram District

1. **Ancode** (N 08° 26.372' E 77° 07.191')
This rock shelter locally known as Pandavanpara located near Perumkadavila village, Neyyattinkara taluk of Thiruvananthapuram district. Ancode shelter have engravings of linear lines and motifs which include 21 cross hatchings vertically and horizontally overlapping each other in the outer portion, flower in hexagonal shape, triangles, rectangle divided into four etc, along with an inscription probably of early Malayalam script called Vattezhuthu, but lost most of the writings.

II. **Megalithic Monuments**

Commonly Megalithic monuments are considered as burial monuments made of huge stone or stone blocks. Different type of Megalithic monuments are found in Kerala, they are *kudakkallu* (Umbrella stone), *toppikkallu* (Cap stone), rock cut cave, stone circle, urn burial, sarcophagus, cist, dolmen and menhir.
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Megalithic Monuments
III. Caves

1. **Venad-Muttukad cave** (N 10° 01.180' E 77° 09.185')
   A naturally formed cave located nearby Muuttukad area, by the side of Megalithic dolmen. Favourable chances of human occupation seen in the earlier periods.

2. **Singkandam Cave** (N 10° 02.368' E 77° 12.280')
   This cave is located in a trek path towards a modern Shiva–Parvathy temple at Singhkandam. The cave is facing towards a small water channel originating from the top of the hill. There are chances of human occupation in the earlier periods, but due to the cultivations in the area most of the things destroyed even inside the cave.

IV. Temples

1. **Kallukovil** (N 08° 67.006' E 77° 02.189')
   This temple is situated in the premises of an estate Rehabilitation Plantation Ltd., Kulathourpuzha Division, Kulathupuzha, Kollam district. This is an unfinished rock cut temple carved on Khondalie rock. Archaeologist P. Rajendran assigns this temple to Buddhist tradition because of its carving technology and unfinished motifs inside the chamber. A symbol similar to ‘om’ also carved in the right wall.
2. **Megalithic Cist converted to Siva temple (N 10° 02.492' E 77° 12.892')**

This site is located by the side of main road leads to Chinnakanal from Singhkandam. This is a Megalithic cist burial is converted to a temple, a trisul/ trident and stone erected resembling Shivlinga also seen here. Regular worship is not present here.

![Megalithic Cist converted to Siva temple](image)

V. **Tribal Settlement**

1. **Chempakathozhukudy Muthuva Colony**

Chempakathozhukudy tribal settlement is known for Muthuva tribes, located around 22 km from Chinnakanal, Munnar Idukki district.

![Chempakathozhukudy Muthuva Colony](image)

VI. **Post holes (N 10° 02.386' E 77° 12.371')**

This post hole is located in the top of a granite hill at Singhkandam, nearby Shiva-Parvathy temple. Two post holes in small size; one is with a Tamil inscription.

![Post holes](image)