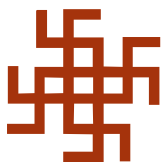


REPORT OF THE
ONE DAY MULTIDISCIPLINARY WORKSHOP ON THE
DOCUMENTATION OF ROCK ART
AND ITS ALLIED SUBJECTS

HELD ON

27 NOVEMBER 2014

VENUE: MITHRAPURAM HALL, UNION CHRISTIAN COLLEGE ALUVA, KERALA



ORGANIZED BY
INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE ARTS (IGNCA) ROCK ART UNIT
AND
UNION CHRISTIAN COLLEGE- DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY



The one day Orientation workshop on **Rock Art and Its Allied Subjects** was attended by 45 students and 15 delegates. The students were drawn from research, post graduate and undergraduate courses. The student delegates represented multiple disciplines such as History, Archaeology & Museology and Languages of Union Christian College, Aluva. The invited delegates represented different stakeholders of rock art and allied heritage such as non-governmental organizations dealing with heritage tourism in Kerala, private collectors of prehistoric Neolithic artifacts and Iron Age archaeological artifacts and representative of the South India Guides Association.

The workshop was intended for the team members of the documentation project. The team members of the Kerala rock art documentation project are 1) Dr. S.N Kumar (Geologist), 2) Dr. Thara. K.Simon (palynology), 3) Ms. Madhavi, K (Prehistory), 4) Dr. Justin.R.Nayagam (ethno botany), 5) Mr. Benny Kurian (natural History), 6) Mohamed A/ Sreelatha Damodaran (multimedia documentation) and 7) Dr. Jenee Peter (Archaeology and State Project Coordinator).Dr. S.N Kumar and Ms. Madhavi. K could not attend the workshop due to job exigencies. Five team members attended the workshop and presented during the second technical session. All the seven team members made PPT presentations. The presentations of the two team members were done in absentia by the Coordinator. IGPCA was represented by Dr B.L Malla (Project Director, Rock Art Department) and Dr Ranbeer Singh (Project Associate, Rock Art Department). The chief resource person was Prof. Sadasiba Pradhan Head, Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, Utkal University, Odisha.

Prior to the workshop, Coordinator had been in touch with all team members. Each team member was asked them about their expectation in joining this project, about the range of this project and their commitment towards the project. The idea shared by team members was also discussed during the workshop and there was a good interaction between the two partner institutions IGPCA and UCC. Initially there were only six team members and following discussions with IGPCA officials it was decided to opt two persons for the multimedia documentation.

The Objective of the workshop was to train a core team for the study of rock art in Kerala and devise a format for the standardized documentation of rock art of Kerala. This will help in thematically identifying the general patterns in rock art and have a thorough documentation. Such documentation has not been attempted before in the state. The documentation is preliminary step to rock art studies as well as conservation and better management. As sites are being lost at an alarming rate in Kerala, the documentation has to take into aspect a key master plan to tackle this issue. Another major issue was that most of the sites are in private hands or forest lands and due permission have to be sought for any fieldwork to go on smoothly.

The Programme Schedule

The programme started at 9.30 A.M. and began with the inaugural session that lasted one hour. This was followed by tea break and interactions. Then we gathered back for the much awaited orientation lecture by Dr. Pradhan which lasted two hours along with interactions. After lunch the second technical session was held in which all team members made presentations. The second session was followed by the valedictory programme.

Inaugural Session

The gathering was welcomed by Ms. Annie Jose, Head, Department of History, U.C College. The concept note of the workshop was introduced by the Project Coordinator, Dr. Jenee Peter, Department of History, U.C College. Following this, all team members were introduced by her. Dr. Raju. K. John, Manager, U.C College gave the presidential address and spoke about future joint ventures of UCC with IGNCA in the field of rock art publications particularly the centenary of the college as proposed by Dr. Malla.

Following this, Dr. B.L Malla, Project Director (R.A), IGNCA made a detailed presentation on IGNCA, Rock art unit, completed projects and ongoing projects. This was a good beginning for the technical sessions that were to follow. The Principal of the College, Dr. A. Benny Cherian gave his remarks after seeing the IGNCA presentation and briefed the gathering on the activities in archaeological field work and research by the department of History. He stressed on the need for urgent documentation and on the role of student

volunteers in this rock art documentation after this workshop. Dr. Pradhan offered felicitations. Ms. Anjali Surendran proposed vote of thanks. This was followed by tea break.

Technical Session I

The first technical session was led by Dr. Sadasiba Pradhan and started at 11.15 am. Prof Pradhan spoke about how over a period of just 150 years of the discovery of rock art it has grown into a convincing science. The natural agents creating rock shelters and its geology were explained and the interconnection between vegetation, humidity, human settlements was well explained. Rock art is meant for leisure and pleasure and is the result of creativity of the past and cognitive attributed of past cultures collectively. There are major threats to rock shelters in India due to weathering of the rock itself and caving in of the projected roof.

Conservation measures in rock shelters and caves should begin with diverting water scientifically. Prof. Pradhan elaborated on the need for multi-disciplinary work in rock art research with several case studies. Visibility is a major factor in rock art discoveries and documentation.

The second part of his orientation lecture covered the practical aspects of the research, field work, difficulties in the field encountered during rock art research. The lack of special guides, bringing in experts, the safety of team members, camping needs and travel plans each can be a hurdles and can be overcome only with collective effort.

Once the field work commences and the team interacts, identification and interpretation naturally follow. This takes more time and multidisciplinary efforts than expected and sufficient time should be allocated for this in the project. The collection of data and preparing a database in host institution will be an ideal platform to start this phase of the work. It is crucial that team members freely communicate and share impressions on the site. A better strategy will be to explore around well-known sites. The identification of local resource persons who knows the terrain, climate, legends and traditions in each zone should be done in the first phase. Local names of rock shelters and caves are to be recorded in this phase. There are various categories of art such as secular,

sacred and functional which help us to understand the time of rock art and its purpose, functions and interpretations.

This demonstration lecture was followed by an active interaction session. There were questions from the team members, delegates as well as students. The questions were on features of rock art; about how changing habitats of hunter gathers in Western Ghats could be retraced from similarities in the rock art depictions 60-70 km away and on the use of trade routes in tracing rock art sites. There were discussions on the permissions needed for studies in forest areas, about evolution of language groups and if there is any evidence of a literate society in rock art depictions in Kerala and about the writings in Edakkal. In the concluding remarks by Dr. Malla and Dr. Pradhanboth emphasized the need to coordinate and motivate each team member and to have a well-planned study trip in a phased manner complete with a checklist and back up. This session was followed by lunch.

Technical Session II

The second technical session began at 2.00 P.M. with a brief introduction to each team members by the state project coordinator Dr. Jenee Peter. The first presentation was by Benny Kurian. The second presentation and third presentation dealt with application of paleobotanical and ethno botanical approaches in rock art sites in Kerala by Dr. Thara.K.Simon and Dr Justin. R. Nayagam. This was followed by a presentation jointly by Sreelatha Damodaran and A. Mohamed who will be in charge of the multimedia documentation. the next two presentations were made in absentia by Dr S.N Kumar and Ms. Madhavi.K and were presented by Dr. Jenee Peter. The last presentation was a summary of the former works in the field of rock art studies by the state project coordinator.

The first presentation was by Benny Kurian. He spoke on the immense possibilities of finding new rock shelter with rock paintings in Marayoor region, the need for interstate exploration as this is the border region and findings from his ethnographic studies of the tribals living in western Ghats of Idukki- Palani region. Dr Jenee complemented with her observations on the possible timeframe of rock art based on archaeological evidence pointing to a late prehistoric and Iron Age origin of rock art and its continuity in living

memories of tribal in the region serving as clues for ethno archaeological analysis of rock art depictions. This was seen clearly in the case of both spirit depiction in art and secular art such as hunting and gathering scenes. Benny Kurian was particularly interested in tracing the domestication of certain species of food plants such as different types of bananas from rock art paintings. Such naturalist's depictions were key to understanding paleo diet also.

The second presentation was by Justine. R. Nayagam on ethno botany. He dealt with traditional uses of plants and their depiction in rock art will help trace movements of endemic plants in western Ghats and about variations in species.

The third presentation was by Dr Thara.K.Simon who will be working on the archaeobotanical samples collected from various rock art sites in Kerala. Her presentation was titled '**The role of palynology in Archaeology**'. The details of the methods and techniques of reaching ancient pollens and spores and the facilities available in the department of Botany Union Christian College for this purpose was elaborated.

The next presentation was by Ms. Sreelatha Damodaran on a unique rock art depiction from northern Kerala. The site Ettukudukka in Kannur district has interesting petroglyphs on laterite, a soft sedimentary weathered rock. This site has strong association with Iron age period which helps to establish that rock art in Kerala was in tandem with iron age monuments in a few sites in Kerala. It also opens up the midlands in Kerala to be covered in rock art documentation. The discussion following this focused on the need to explore these less known sites further than focusing on well-known sites like Edakkal alone.

The next presentation was by Madhavi .K read by Jenee Peter who presented the theme based model proposed for rock art studies in Kerala. The presentation dealt with challenges, contributions from prehistoric rock art studies, expected outcome, and a detailed understanding of the cognitive aspects of ancient humans capes.

The last presentation was also made by Jenee Peter for Dr. S.N Kumar on the geology of rock art sites in Kerala the presentation. The ppt titled 'Rock art and geology of Kerala' provided a base map on the known locales of rock art in Kerala, geomorphology, structures

in rocks and formation of rock shelters and points to be documented in the field, reasons for non-preservation of rock art in Kerala and about documenting nearby quarry types.

Valedictory Session

This was followed by the valediction programme. Welcome was by Ms. Twincy Varghese, Assistant Professor, Department of History, U.C College. The session was presided by Ms. Thara. K. Simon, former Head of the department and College International Programmes Coordinator and a team member. She spoke about the excitement of team members and the guidance received from the workshop which was a mix of interaction, insights as well as practical suggestions. This was followed by concluding remarks by Dr. Malla on behalf of IGNCA. Dr. Pradhan wished all success to the team from Kerala. Dr Jenee Peter proposed the vote of thanks. The workshop concluded at 3.30 P.M. and was followed by tea and interaction among the delegates over tea.

Future programmes

After the one day workshop, briefing was held between the team members. A meeting of all the team members is proposed at the venue of the rock art exhibition with a discussion on rock art in a nutshell from around the globe. This may be followed by a panel discussion. Following this, measures have been initiated to contact the Forest department Government of Kerala for field visit permissions in December itself for which a letter from IGNCA is to be forwarded for local permissions. The first field work is proposed in the first week of March, 2015.

Jenee Peter
Workshop Coordinator

