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I

INTRODUCTION

Rock art is one of our greatest surviving art treasures. It is a vital archaeological source for studying and analysing the cognitive evolution of human intellect across the world. As the written word had not yet been conceived, the urge to articulate, document and preserve ideas and events found expression in pictorial representations. The vast corpus of rock art found in almost all parts of the world provides the most comprehensive database for understanding universal forms of expression and communication in human societies, right from the Pleistocene epoch. The intrinsic value of rock art lies in its universal appeal and in its ability to endure and survive in a manner in which everyone can experience it. Till the recent past, the content of rock art was studied as an indicator of the evolution of the cognitive capabilities of its authors. However, of late attempts are being made by scholars to explore the possibility of the proximity of rock art to the art of indigenous societies of the world such as aborigines, tribals, agro-pastoral and nomads. Rock art has now come to be recognised as an independent subject in art, archaeology and ethnography. Scientific and multidisciplinary studies involving chronology, ecology, the process of site formation and landscape archaeology have been initiated in India recently. Since rock art is an intricate and complex domain that covers material and cognitive aspects of culture, a multidisciplinary approach has been recommended to decode and understand it in all its dimensions. India is fortunate as it possesses

one of the three largest concentrations of this world heritage, the other two being Australia and South Africa, where rock art is still a living pursuit.

The study of rock art has great relevance in the context of re-definitions in the study of all arts. So far, we have followed mechanistic and analytical approaches which assume that the underlying significance of this kind of creativity cannot be inferred by statistical counts of frequency of figures though nothing can undermine the complexity and richness of this tradition more. At the moment, there is not much available in India by way of interpretative treatment of Prehistoric art. The new multidisciplinary approach initiated by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi aim at a global view of culture and of the very essence of the spirit of our species (*Homo sapiens*). Generally speaking, archaeological, ethnographical and psycho-analytical approaches are being followed in the study of rock art.

In India, the primary approaches being followed are archaeological and ethnographical. Because of continuity in the artistic traditions, their interpretations are explored through ethnographical studies of the communities living adjacent to the rock art sites. Two main facets emerge in the ethnographic study of rock art: One is direct relationship between native tribal groups and



the rock art in their habitats and the second is the inference which can be extracted from the cognition of the natives about this art. It does not matter if they did not do it or if it belongs to another age which is not connected to them. At the same time, archaeology claiming to be cognitive, aiming at how a culture is understood needs tautegoric ethnography to plan its interfaces.

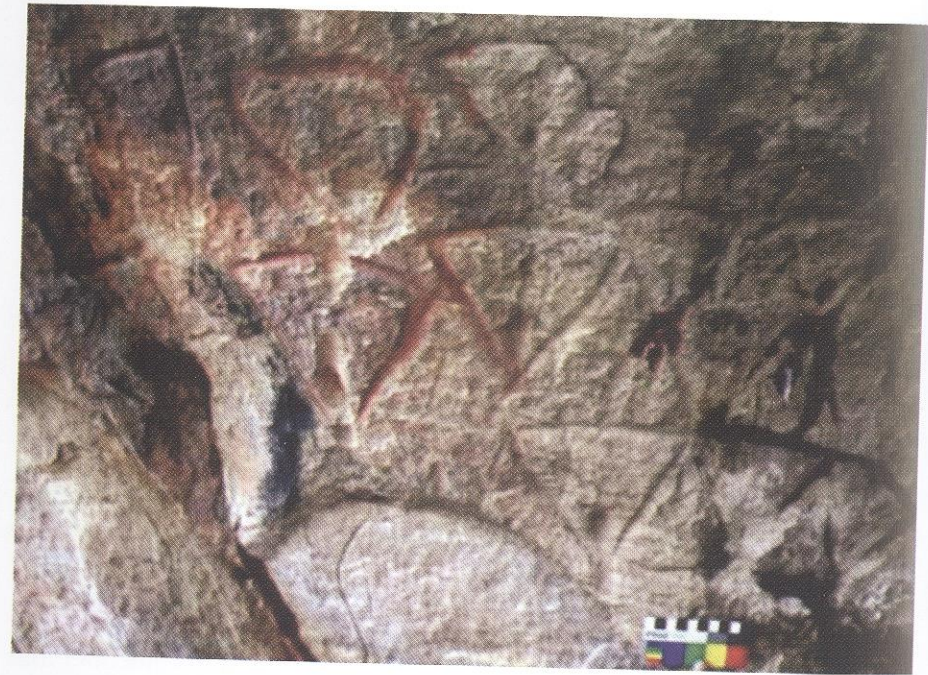
True understanding cannot come by imposing pre-conceived, uni-dimensional models of cognitive development of the human language or through artificial order and data. In the cultures where there is no continuity of artistic traditions due to developments like industrialisation, interpretations are mainly sought through psycho-analytical approaches. In such cases, psychiatrists try to explore the minds of Prehistoric artists. Starting from the concept of sublimation in relation to creativity and artistic production, scholars follow a psychiatrist's point of view and take into consideration some common elements between art and psychosis, psychosis and infantile thought and art.

I.I. Rock Art of India

India houses one of the largest, richest and diverse repositories of rock art traditions. Rock art has been found throughout the length and breadth of the country. Central India has by far the largest concentration of painted rock shelters. In the Central, Western and Eastern parts of the country rock art is found on the walls and ceilings of rock shelters. In Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh rock art is reported from boulders/rock shelters.

Kerala is notable for rock art found in underground caves. Megalithic burials are the favoured canvas in Tamil Nadu.

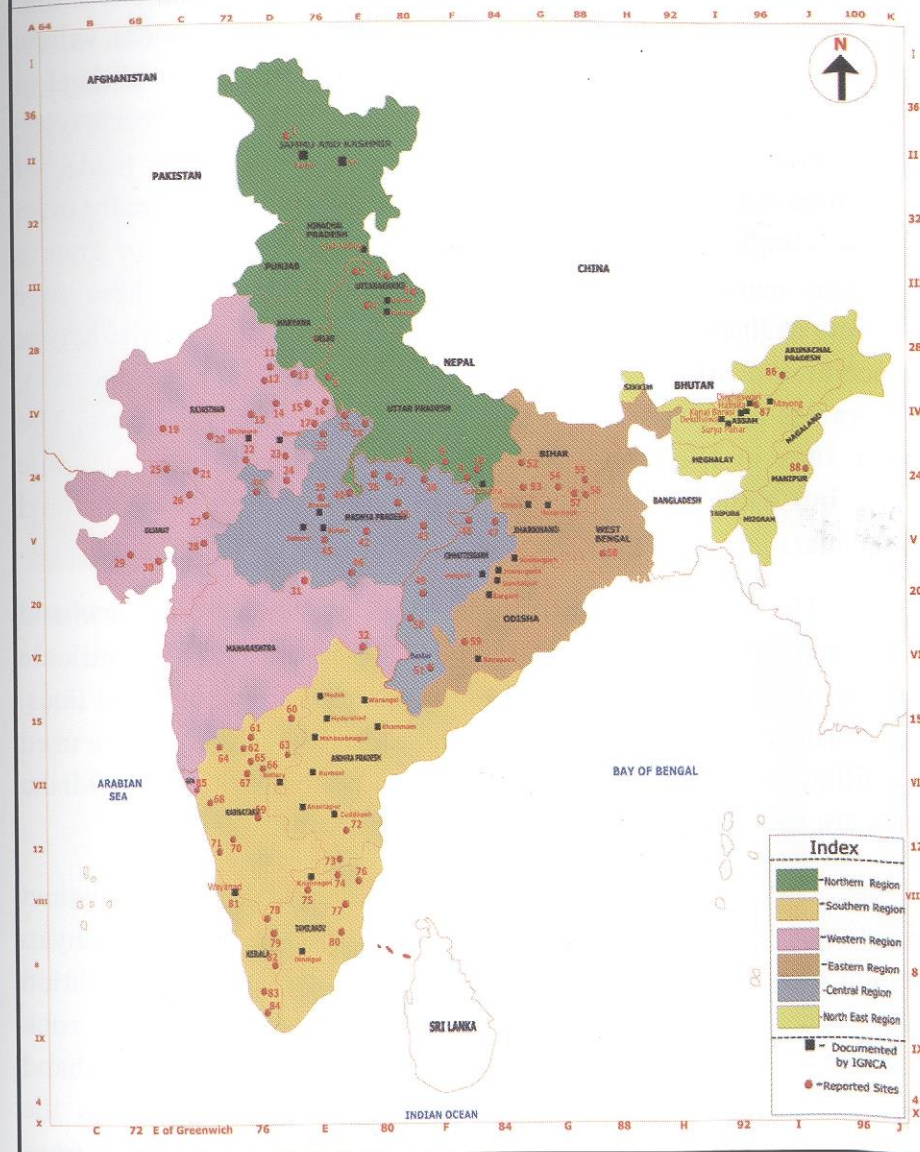
Undoubtedly this landscape art comprising both pictographs and petroglyphs is common to all varieties of geological formations, but they vary in terms of time, density and cultural affinity from one geological zone to another. For instance, rock bruising and engravings (a variety of petroglyphs) are generally confined to granite-gneiss and dolerite-gabro landscapes of Neolithic-Megalithic



Pigmented Engraving, Cuttack, Odisha



Distribution of Rock Art in India and Sites documented by IGNC



Distribution of Rock Art in India and Districts Sites Documented by IGNC

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Gilgit | 45. Hoshangabad |
| 2. Uttarkashi | 46. Chhindwara |
| 3. Chamoli | 47. Sarguja |
| 4. Pauri | 48. Korea |
| 5. Pithoragarh | 49. Durg |
| 6. Agra | 50. Kanker |
| 7. Banda | 51. Bastar |
| 8. Allahabad | 52. Gopalganj |
| 9. Varanasi | 53. Gaya |
| 10. Mirzapur | 54. Nawada |
| 11. Jhunjhunum | 55. Jamui |
| 12. Sikar | 56. Giridih |
| 13. Alwar | 57. Koderma |
| 14. Jaipur | 58. Midnapore |
| 15. Dausa | 59. Kalahandi |
| 16. Bharatpur | 60. Gulbarga |
| 17. Sawai Madhopur | 61. Bijapur |
| 18. Ajmer | 62. Bagalkot |
| 19. Barmer | 63. Raichur |
| 20. Pali | 64. Belgaum |
| 21. Sirohi | 65. Badami |
| 22. Chittaurgarh | 66. Koppal |
| 23. Kota | 67. Gadag |
| 24. Jhalawar | 68. Uttara Kannada |
| 25. Banaskantha | 69. Chitradurga |
| 26. Sabarkantha | 70. Shimoga |
| 27. Dahod | 71. Udupi |
| 28. Vadodara | 72. Nellore |
| 29. Surendranagar | 73. Chittoor |
| 30. Bhavnagar | 74. Vellore |
| 31. Amravati | 75. Dharampuri |
| 32. Chandrapur | 76. Villupuram |
| 33. Morena | 77. Arcot |
| 34. Gwalior | 78. Nilgiris |
| 35. Shivpuri | 79. Coimbatore |
| 36. Chhatarpur | 80. Sivaganga |
| 37. Panna | 81. Wayanad |
| 38. Rewa | 82. Idukki |
| 39. Vidisha | 83. Kollam |
| 40. Sagar | 84. Thiruvananthapuram |
| 41. Katni | 85. South Goa |
| 42. Narsinghpur | 86. Lower Subansiri |
| 43. Jabalpur | 87. Sonitpur |
| 44. Mandasaur | 88. Ukhrul |



1.1.1. Rock Art of the Eastern Region

The Eastern region encompasses the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Odisha. Characteristic features of the rock art in Jharkhand and Odisha include the predominance of pictographs. These are both geometric and abstract decorative motifs. The monochrome paintings are mostly in red, white and rarely also in yellow. Bi-chrome paintings are in red and white. Odisha has a number of petroglyphs. Chronologically, the rock art of both the states date from Mesolithic to early historic period. Indigenous groups in both states have a tradition of painting on the walls of their houses on auspicious occasions. These paintings often show motifs that are frequently found on rock art sites. Rock art in Bihar is an extension of Madhya Pradesh and southern Uttar Pradesh tradition. It is almost exclusively pictographic. It dates from the Mesolithic to historic period.

In Odisha, the rock art sites are distributed across the state in the districts of Bargarh, Cuttack, Jharsuguda, Kalahandi, Keonjhar, Khurda, Mayurbhanj, Nuapada, Sambalpur, Sundargarh and Suvarnapur. The two districts of Sundargarh and Sambalpur have the highest concentration of rock art sites because of the favourable geomorphological situation there. The western part of Odisha is an extension of the Chhotanagpur plateau and the Chhattisgarh basin. The geomorphological set up of this area is comparable to the geomorphological set up of the rock art sites in Central India, which account for more than one-third of the country's rock art heritage. Although there are a large number of rock shelters in these geological formations, rock art is found in only a few of them.

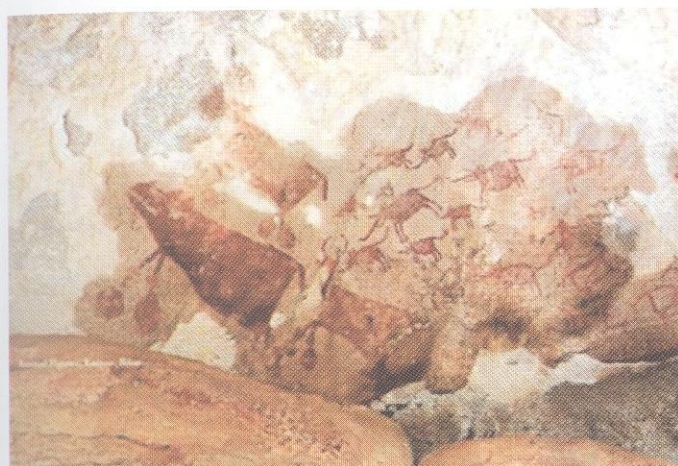
Rock art sites in Jharkhand are concentrated in the northern districts of Hazaribagh, Chatra, Koderma and Giridih. Physiographically, the area falls within the upper Damodar valley, also known as Karanpura. The rock art sites of this region abound in the hill ranges of the Satpahari and Mahadi with the former having more such sites. The hill ranges are predominantly made of sandstone with pockets of lime, shale kaol in and occasionally even pebble conglomerate. At some places volcanic rocks like granite outcrops mark the intrusion of the Deccan Trap. Of these four districts in Jharkhand, Hazaribagh and Chatra account for the largest concentration of rock art sites in the state and between the two, Chatra has more such sites within its administrative boundaries. The main sites in Hazaribagh district are Isco and Nautangwa while those in Chatra are Sidpa, Gonda, Thetangi, Raham, Satpahari and Kahnadar.

The subject matter of the rock art of Odisha and Jharkhand is by and large non-thematic and what is seen is a host of intricate geometric and non-geometric patterns made of a host of spiral lines, cross hatches and zigzag lines. In central India such motifs are used for filling the body of human and animal figures whereas in Odisha they are independent patterns.

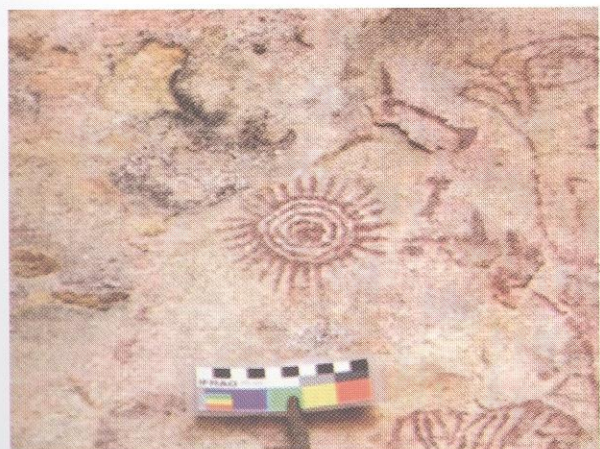
The rock art tradition of Bihar is marked by two distinct painting traditions. The first tradition is found in the Vindhyan region of north-west Bihar in Kaimur region. The second tradition was brought to light in 1993-94 by the discovery of painted rock shelters in the Nawada district adjoining the Bihar-Jharkhand border. In this respect the second tradition may be taken as the northern extension of the rock art tradition already reported from



Jharkhand. Soon thereafter painted rock shelters were also found in Jamui district. At present, rock art sites are known in the districts of Gaya and Gopalganj, in addition to the two already mentioned earlier.



Animal Figures, Kaimur, Bihar



Concentric Circles, Hazaribagh, Jharkhand



I.I.II. Rock Art of the Western Region

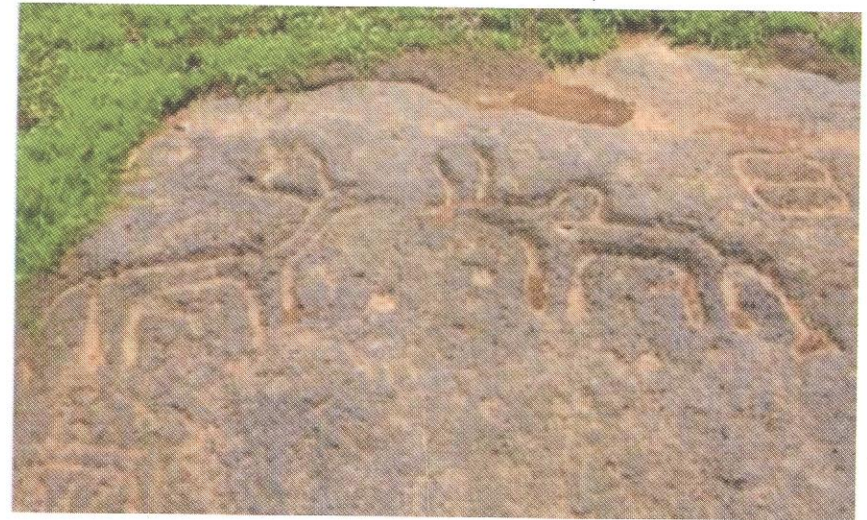
The states comprising the Western region are Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Goa. Both petroglyphs and paintings are found in Rajasthan's rock art repertoire. The common themes in the painted rock shelters are animal, anthropomorphic and human figures, a human with a bull, hunting, battle and dancing scenes and geometric and decorative motifs. Paintings are mainly monochrome and red in colour. Sporadic reporting of cup-marks is found in sites in southern Rajasthan. North-east Rajasthan has a large number of petroglyphs. While cupules or cup-marks are common, engravings of human and animal figures are also frequently found in this region. Chronologically, Rajasthan's rock art has a long time-bracket from the mesolithic to medieval period. The rock art tradition of Gujarat has similarities with that of central India. It is datable from the mesolithic to Historic period. No petroglyphs have been found in Gujarat so far. Paintings depict animal and human figures, hunting scenes, floral motifs and religious symbols.

Rajasthan, located in the north-western part of the country, was put on the rock art map of India by Dr. V. S. Wakankar when he noticed painted rock shelters through the window of his train compartment while passing through a gorge in Kota. After this more painted rock shelters were discovered in the Chambal valley falling within the present districts of Kota and Baran. With the involvement of several scholars, rock art of south-eastern Rajasthan was firmly established among the well-known centres in the country. Meanwhile, pioneering work by Dr. M. L. Sharma and his team of college lecturers, students and local enthusiasts discovered and

documented an entirely new region of rock art study in north-east Rajasthan. As a result of such concentrated efforts, rock art sites have been reported from almost all the districts in the state - Jaipur, Sikar, Jhunjhunu, Alwar, Bharatpur, Dausa, Sawai Madhopur, Pali, Jodhpur, Sirohi, Chittaurgarh, Bhilwara, Kota, Bundi and Jhalawar.

The rock art tradition of Gujarat was brought before scholars as late as the 1970s when Dr. V. H. Sonawane discovered painted rock shelters in Tarsang in the Panchmahals district in the state. Despite this late beginning, rock art sites have now been discovered in six districts in the state. The Gujarat State Archaeology Department and teachers and research scholars of M.S. University, Baroda have played an important role in this field. The sites reported so far have all been found confined to the hilly granite outcrops of the districts of Panchmahals, Vadodara, Sabarkantha, Banaskantha, Bhavnagar and Surendranagar.

The common themes in the painted rock shelters in Rajasthan and Gujarat are animal figures, anthropomorphic figures, human figures, human with bull, female figures, row of human figures, hunting scene, battle scene, dancing scene and geometric and decorative motifs. Among the animal figures, the readily identifiable ones are of cattle (particularly a humped bull), horse, deer, dog, tiger, snake, lizard, frog, birds, religious motifs like *Triratna*, *Svastika*, trident and lamp.



Animal Figures, Pansoimol, Goa



Human Figures, Sembalpani, Gujarat





Animal Figures, Bundi, Rajasthan

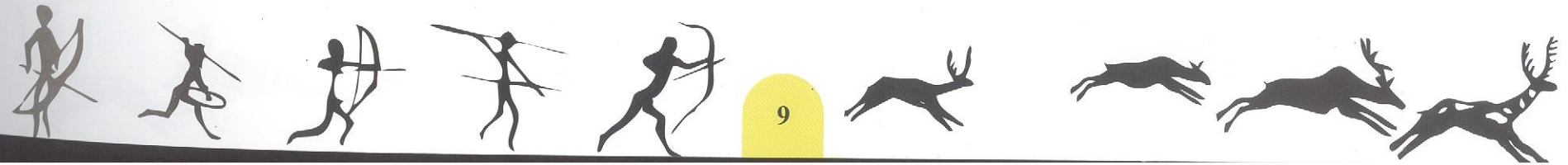


Human Figure, Sindhudurg, Maharashtra

I. I.III. Rock Art of the Northern Region

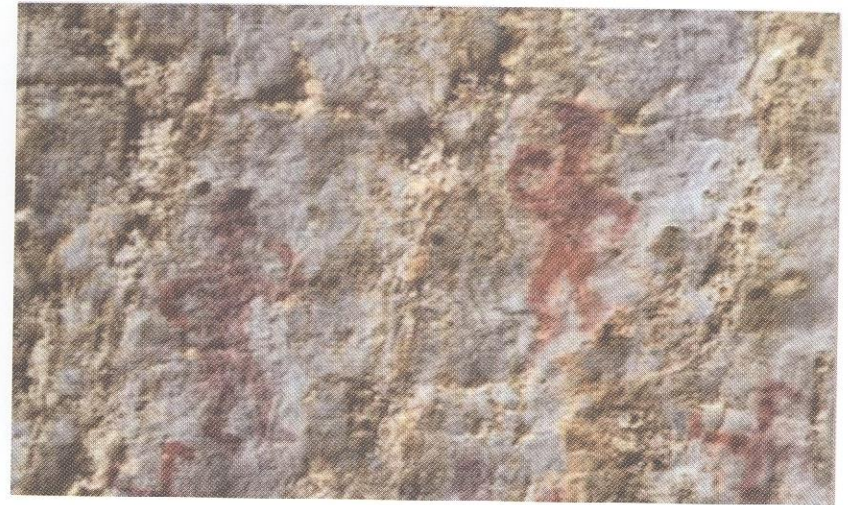
The states of Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh form part of the northern region. Rock art is known in Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The rock art of Ladakh (Jammu and Kashmir) is exclusively petroglyphs while that of Uttarakhand is predominantly pictographic with a small percentage of petroglyphs. The rock art of Ladakh has to be seen as a part of a larger tradition encompassing Pakistan, China and parts of Central Asia. In Ladakh, two thematically distinct rock art traditions are visible. The first is secular and predominantly includes hunting scenes and animal and human figures and the second has Buddhist affiliations. Petroglyphs in Uttarakhand almost exclusively comprise of cup-marks. Rows of anthropomorphic figures simulating dance movements are a common depiction among the painted figures. The rock art of Uttar Pradesh is almost exclusively pictographic and is a continuation of the Vindhyan tradition.

Rock art specimens found in Leh, Zaskar, Kargil, Chanthang and Nubrain (Ladakh) and Spiti regions in Himachal Pradesh may be counted as one of the earliest record of human presence in this region. Rock art sites in Uttarakhand are reported in the districts of Almora, Pithoragarh, Uttarakashi, Pauri and Chamoli. Sustained efforts by individual scholars, enthusiasts and government departments have led to the discovery of rock art in Chandauli, Sonbhadra, Mirzapur, Allahabad, Chitrakoot, Banda and Agra in Uttar Pradesh.

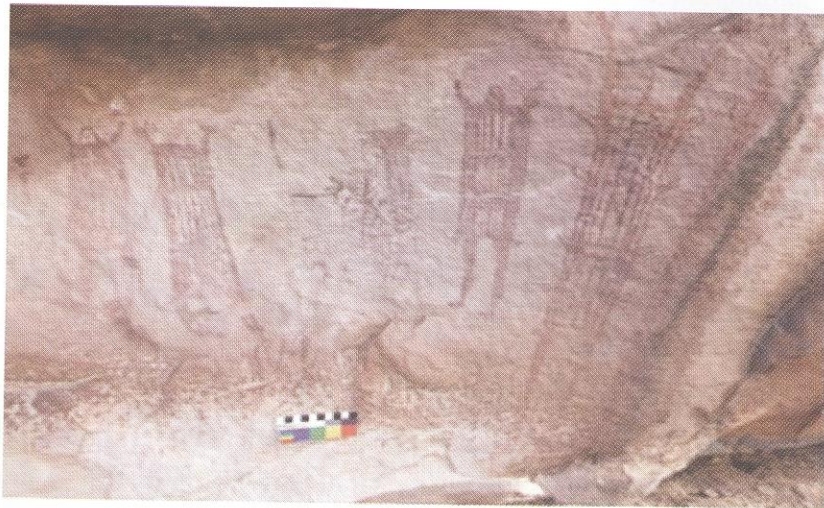




Hunting Scene, Leh, Ladakh



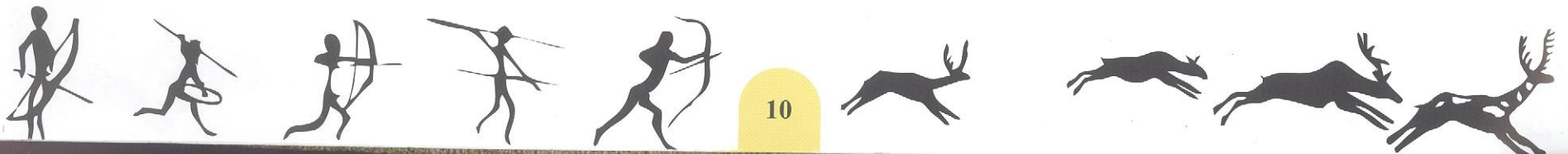
Human Figures, Kaza, Himachal Pradesh



Anthropomorphs, Sonbhadra, Uttar Pradesh



Human Figures, Almora, Uttarakhand





Labyrinth, Kabonkhangna, Manipur



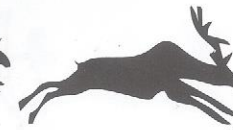
Geometrical Symbols, Sonitpur, Assam



Wild Animals and Birds, Mizo Society, Mizoram

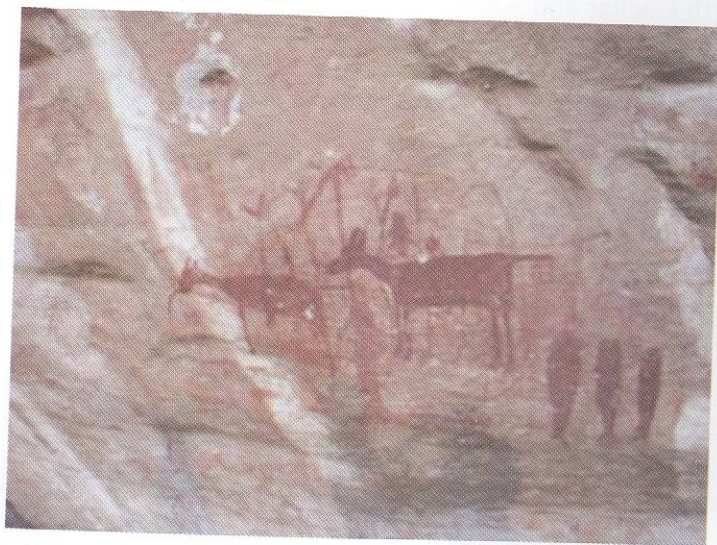
1.1.IV. Rock Art of the North-Eastern Region

The north-eastern part of India comprises of eight states marked by ecological and ethnic diversities. The archaeological richness of the ethnic groups with diverse cultural traits makes the north-eastern states of India an important region for the study of rock art. The only form of rock art that has been reported from the region so far is petroglyphs from the historical period. Some of the important rock art sites in north-eastern India are Unakoti (Tripura), Dimapur (Nagaland), Salangthal (Manipur), Ridawpi Jung (Mizoram), and Suryapahar (Assam). The themes depicted are mainly mythical animals, birds, flowers, leaves, daggers and decorated designs like circles, semi-circles and straight lines. Megaliths of different shapes and sizes with or without engravings are spread in the hilly region of North Cachar and Karbi Anglong, Kamrup and Nagaon districts.

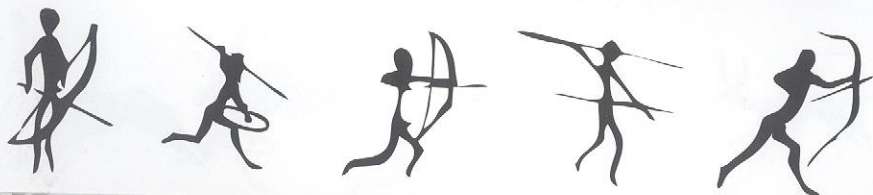




Human Figure, Edakal, Kerala



Animal Figures, Warangal, Andhra Pradesh



I.I.V. Rock Art of the Southern Region

The states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala form the southern region. Rock art traditions of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu appear to be quite different from each other. However, they have some common traits. Humped bull figures are found in large numbers both as petroglyphs and pictographs in the rock art of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, especially from the Neolithic period. Rock bruising in these two states also start from the Neolithic period. Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have painted figures depicted on the walls of Megalithic burials. These paintings are predominantly in white colour. Kerala is unique in having underground caves decorated with deep engravings. The walls of these caves bear such depictions. In addition, Kerala also has a number of sites with painted figures and motifs.

The main concentration of rock art sites is in the districts of Belgaum, Bagalkote, Gadag, Koppal, Kalburgi, Bellary, Chitrdurga, Bijapur, Uttara Kannada, Udupi and Shimoga in Karnataka; and Villupuram, Vellore, Madurai, Krishnagiri, Nilgiri, Madurai, Dindigal, Coimbatore, Teni, Dharmapuri, Tirunelveli, Sivagangai and Tiruvannamalai in Tamil Nadu; Adoni, Kalvakurti, Warangal, Nandikotkur, Mahabubnagar, Uravakonda, Husnabad, Muddanur, Jammalamadugu, Kolhapur, Kodangal, Kurnool, Medak, Satyavidu, Banaganapalle, Rajendra Nagar, Veldurti, Makhtal, Markapur, Prakasam, Regonda, Sattupalli, Peddapalli, Husnabad, Satyavidu, Jagdevpur, Rayadurg and Gandhapenta in Andhra Pradesh; and

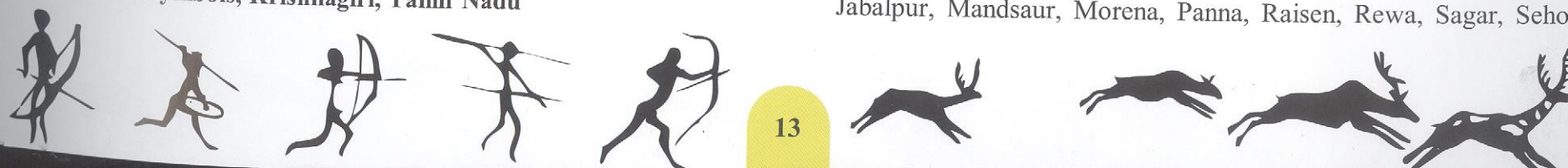


Kollam, Wayanad, Kannur, Idukki, Palakkad, Ernakulam and Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala.

Rock art of south India comprises both pictographs and petroglyphs. In Kerala and Tamil Nadu both forms of rock art is found. Here geometrical motifs dominate the imagery, with few human and animal figures. On the other hand, petroglyph representations of cattle dominate in the Karnataka region. Pictographs rule the rock art of Andhra Pradesh, the majority of which are in either red or white, a wide range of wild fauna occur as red painted images, typically deer along with porcupines, tortoise, carnivores, anthropomorphs and geometric figures. The key feature of the Prehistoric art of Andhra Pradesh is elegance and ease imparted to outlines of animal and human figures, which distinguishes this art from the heavy outlines of other rock art. This also represents dynamism of action. Prehistoric rock art of South India continued to be made through the Historical period with the emergence of new styles and forms.



Astronomical Symbols, Krishnagiri, Tamil Nadu



I.I.VI. Rock Art of the Central Region

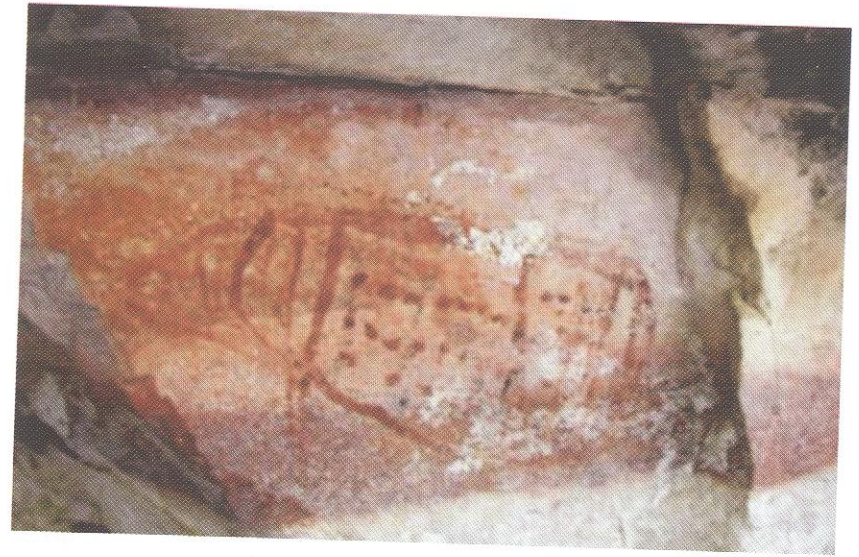
Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh form part of the Central region and together they account for the largest concentration of rock art sites in India. The rock paintings of Madhya Pradesh are mainly figurative and thematic and are dated from Upper Palaeolithic to the Historic period. The painted rock shelters are mostly concentrated in the Vindhyan ranges. Petroglyphs are an important feature of the rock art repertoire of Madhya Pradesh that has come to light in recent years. They mostly comprise of cup-marks or cupules. Chhattisgarh has a large number of abstract decorative motifs; human and animal figures are very rare. Red and white colour dominates the painted motifs, both in monochrome and bi-chrome. In this respect, Chhattisgarh is similar to both Odisha and Jharkhand.

Central India has a vast number of rock art sites, a natural paradise endowed with various hilly ranges like Satpura and Vindhya, forest resources, rich fertile soil and perennial river valleys like Narmada, Tapi, Chambal, Shipra, Son, Mahanadi, Betwa and Indrawati. These places have, therefore, been a meeting ground for different cultures since the earliest times. Sources of water, availability of raw material for making tools, edible roots and fruits provided ideal habitat conditions for early man.

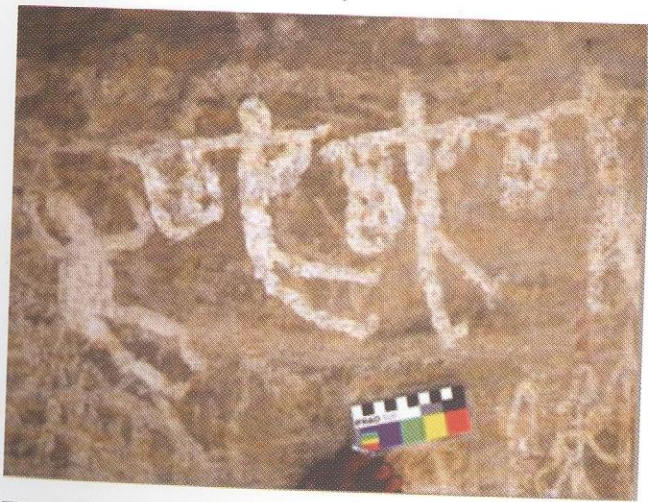
In Madhya Pradesh rock art sites have been reported from as many as 28 districts. The most prolific among them are the districts of Bhopal, Chhatarpur, Chhindwara, Gwalior, Hoshangabad, Jabalpur, Mandsaur, Morena, Panna, Raisen, Rewa, Sagar, Sehore

and Vidisha. Among these Hoshangabad, Raisen, Sagar, Mandsaur, Sehore and Bhopal account for the largest concentration of rock art sites. The important sites in the state are the Bhimbetka group, the Adamgarh-Pachmarhi group, Kathotiya, Jaora, Firangi, Shyamla hills, Mahadeo, Chhibar Nala, Chaturbhuj Nala, Gandhi Sagar Dam and Nagauri. An interesting feature of rock art study in Madhya Pradesh is the excavation of some painted rock shelters which provide hard archaeological evidence of the dates of the paintings.

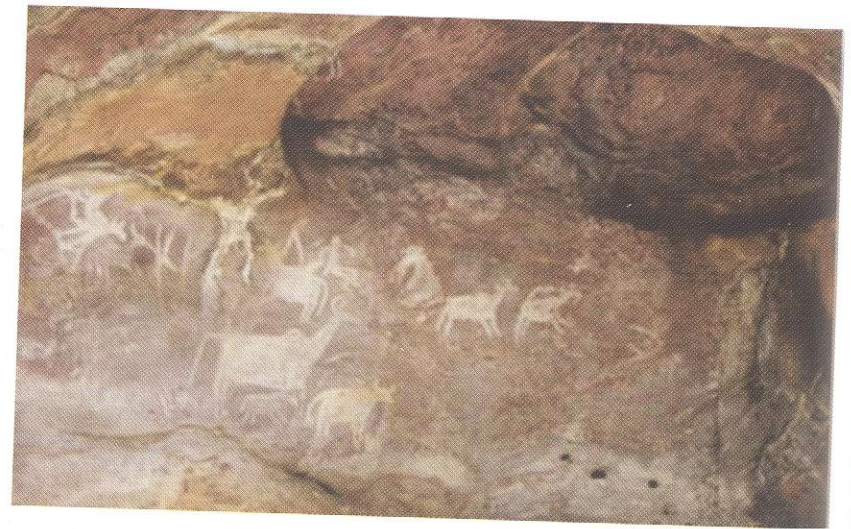
In Chhattisgarh rock art sites have been reported from the districts of Raigarh, Kanker, Korja, Sarguja, Durg and Bastar. The images on the rock surfaces include anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and geometric figures. Other forms include social groups, objects of transport, plants and flowers. A vast majority of the paintings are in single colour, although bi-chrome and polychrome imageries are also known, though rarely.



Boar, Raigarh, Chhattisgarh



Honey Collection Scene, Raisen, Madhya Pradesh



Human and Animal Figures, Raisen, Madhya Pradesh

