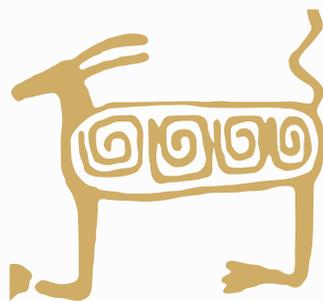


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## Introduction

Bansi Lal Malla

India and China both have a glorious and hoary past. In fact, they are not merely societies but civilisations. We do not know exactly when and how they started exchanging their cultural elements, but we do know that they grew in parallel and shared their cultural traits since the beginning of human history and this tradition has been continuing ever since.

Rock art is one of the greatest surviving art treasures of both these countries, which possesses a large body of evidence of the artistic, cognitive and cultural beginnings of human beings. The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) has conceived a major academic programme that relates to exploring artistic manifestations emanating from man's primary sense perceptions. Man's first awareness of the world around him came through his primeval sense of sight and ability to hear. Rock art forms crucial components of the Adi Drishya (Primeval Vision) programme. Its conceptual plan aims to open the doors to the realisation that rock art is pure and absolute and hence capable of dispensing great experiences beyond its original culture and time. Rock art is a vital archaeological source to study and analyse the cognitive evolution of human intellect across the world. The intrinsic efficacy of the rock art lies in its universality of appeal and to endure and sustain in a manner in which all can discern it.

In its series of national and international events, IGNCA organised an exhibition on 'Indian Rock Art' in The World Rock Art Museum at Yinchuan, China in 2014. An Indian delegation also participated in the Chinese Helan Mountain International Rock Art Summit Forum held on 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> August, 2014 on their invitation. The exhibition was inaugurated on 27<sup>th</sup> August, 2014 and remained open for the public till 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2015. In order to further strengthen the communication and cooperation between China and India, IGNCA reciprocated the gesture by way of inviting Chinese scholars/institutions to participate in an India-China Rock Art Workshop-cum-Exhibition in India from 24<sup>th</sup> February - 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2016. On this occasion IGNCA also organised a series of special lectures from 24 - 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2016. About fifty scholars from both the countries participated in the event. They shared their valuable and latest experiences in the field of documentation techniques, management and conservation of rock art sites and research methodologies adopted for the interpretation of rock art. The importance of rock art for archaeology, ethnology and lifestyle was the main focus of the workshop. The scholars also discussed about the recent developments in rock art research, documentation and management.

It was a privilege for IGNCA to host such an important India-China Rock Art event with an urge to analyse where we stand in the global context. The concern for exploring new ways and means for rock art research and for deciphering it has opened a new chapter in the history of research in pre-historic and tribal art. The Exhibition was inaugurated by Shri K. K. Mittal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Government of India who was the Chief Guest on the occasion. Mr. Zhang Zhihong, Cultural Counsellor, Embassy of China in India was the Guest of Honour and, Prof. Zhang Yasha, Director of Rock Art Research Association China (RARAC), Minzu University, China was the International Guest. The inaugural function was chaired by Shri Chinmaya R. Gharekhan, Former President, IGNCA Trust.

The present two volumes of the publication- *Understanding Rock Art of India-China* are the outcome of the above-said workshop, organised by the IGNCA at New Delhi in February, 2016. First volume is on *Rock Art of India* and second on *Rock Art of China*. In addition to that some of the special lectures delivered by the scholars in India and China have been included to these volumes to make them more academically enriching.

# Rock Art of India

## Volume I

In the first paper of the first volume on 'Understanding the Context of Rock Art Through Archaeological/Cultural Landscaping', B. L. Malla has given a bird's eye view of the Rock Art of India and has also discussed about the importance of the multi disciplinary approach in the field of the rock art studies.

V. H. Sonawane in his paper 'Development of Rock Art Research in India' discusses about the distribution, nature, history of Indian rock art research and role of various rock art research societies etc.

A. Sundara's paper 'Unconventional Prehistoric Visuals: An Appreciation (South Indian Proto and Early Historic Rock Art with Particular Reference to Karnataka)' deals with the history of rock art research in general and south Indian states in particular. He describes Karnataka's rock art in detail such as relative dating, salient features of rock art of Karnataka etc.

The paper titled 'Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic Rock Art of Southern India: With Special Reference to the Southern Deccan' by Ravi Korisetar gives a brief history of rock art research and recently discovered rock art sites in South Deccan region.

N. Chandramouli in his paper on the 'Rock Art in Andhra Pradesh' has divided it in the different geological zones of Andhra Pradesh. An elaborate account of some of the important sites is given covering the geology, drainage, flora, fauna, rock shelters and the paintings therein, thematic content of the paintings, styles, superimpositions, relative chronology etc.

K. Rajan in his paper titled 'Rock Art and its Cultural Context - Recent Evidences in Tamil Nadu, India' has given the detailed account of the history of research, chronology, themes etc. of that area.

Awadh Kishore Prasad in his paper 'Rock Art of Eastern India with Special Reference to Jharkhand and Adjoining Bihar: Some Unique and Special Features' has highlighted some of the unique and special features of that area.

Somnath Chakraverty in his paper 'Megaliths and Rock Art Tradition in the East and Northeastern States of India' has given a general terminology of rock art and a brief distribution of rock art of other parts of India. He has mainly attempted an ethnographical approach for interpreting the rock art, especially of northeast India.

O. C. Handa in his paper 'Rock Art in the Western Himalayan Region: An Overview' has given an overview of the rock art of the area. It covers not only the petroglyphic 'tools' of the prehistoric past, but also the relics of the 'religio-aesthetic' merit also.

R. C. Agrawal's paper 'Adivasi Art: Genesis, Development and its Preservation' is dealing with the concept of Adivasi, their artistic activities associating with rock art and also the formation of some agencies to conduct research and preservation of such arts.

K. Krishnan in his paper on the 'Perceiving the Mind - A Journey through Indian Rock Art' has described the developmental stages of stone tools and artistic activities of human genus on the basis of its cognitive development. He has pointed out that the rock art as a medium shows their mental advancement and development of human.

Sadasiba Pradhan in his paper 'Decoding Rock Art: An Ethno-archaeological Perspective' as is obvious from the title itself has tried to decode rock art of Odisha through the archaeological and ethnographical approaches. According to him, Rock art in ancient times

was not simply for its own sake; rather it was a product of the pervasive cultural fabric of the prehistoric society.

Jagannath Dash in his paper on the 'Palm Prints in Rock Art: An Anthropological Analysis' has given an ethnographical analysis of the palm prints both in vernacular and classical traditions with the palm prints found in the rock art.

V. H. Sonawane's paper 'Interpreting Rock Art' describes about the current status of rock art research and also about the role of the scientific and technological advances in this field. He has also given the plausible interpretation of the design engraved on the fluted chert core of Upper Palaeolithic period reported from Chandravati (Rajasthan) in the light of our revised understanding.

The paper 'Conservation and Preservation of Rock Art Sites: Some Issues' by R. C. Agrawal focuses on rock art ecosystems, its natural and human threats and preventive measures etc.

The last paper of the first volume 'Rock Art and its Conservation', Devananda Beura has given a detailed account of the origin and evolution of rock art and threat and management of sites etc.

Somnath Chakraverty in his paper 'Megaliths and Rock Art Tradition in the East and Northeastern States of India' has given a general terminology of rock art and a brief distribution of rock art of other parts of India. He has mainly attempted an ethnographical approach for interpreting the rock art, especially of northeast India.

