

Rock Art Studies

Concept, Methodology, Context,
Documentation and Conservation



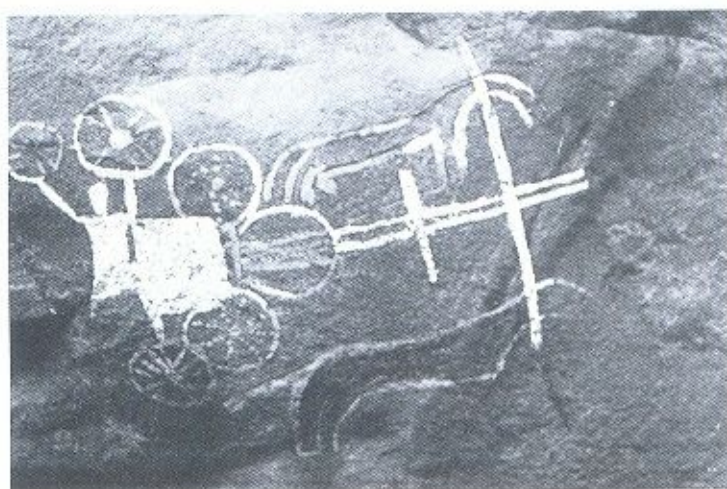
Volume I



Edited by Bansi Lal Malla

Introduction

Bansi Lal Malla



The present volumes—*Rock Art Studies, Volumes I & II*—are outcome of the International Conference on Rock Art held under the auspices of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi from 6–13 December 2012. IGNCA's year-long silver jubilee celebrations began with this event. It coincided with an impressive and well received rock art exhibition (6 December 2012 to 23 January 2013) and an exhibition of rock art books (6–12 December 2012), special lectures (7–11 December 2012) by renowned international scholars, artists' workshops (6–12 December 2012), and a field trip (12–13 December 2012) to the Bundi rock art site. These events highlighted the importance of rock art in archaeological, ethnological, and lifestyle studies. The event was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Vice President of India, Professor M. Hamid Ansari on 6 December 2012. Internationally renowned scholar Dr. (Mrs.) Kapila Vatsyayan, Founder Trustee, IGNCA gave a talk on 'Rock Art Studies: IGNCA's Experience' on the occasion, which set the foundation for further deliberations. Another reputed scholar, Professor Robert G. Bednarik gave an overview on 'The World of Rock Art'. Shri Chinmaya R. Gharekhan, President, the IGNCA Trust chaired the session. Many dignitaries like ambassadors, renowned scholars, and heads of institutes graced the occasion. Around 75 experts on rock art from all over the world participated in the conference and shared



their experiences and researches on rock art. It was a well conceived and fruitful event, the second of its kind organized by IGNCA. The first Global Rock Art Conference was organized by IGNCA in 1993. These events have left an indelible impression on the minds of the participants, both for the quantity and quality of the exchanges and debates, and for the beauty of the various ceremonies and displays.

The present event, according to Professor Robert G. Bednarik, Founding Convener and Editor of the International Federation of Rock Art Organizations (IFRAO), "has added to the achievements of the IGNCA in the sphere of rock art promotion, which were already considerable, and it is self-evident that this creates the conditions under which rock art protection is most likely to flourish". Another internationally reputed scholar, Professor Lawrence Loendorf said that "from the inaugural function to the valedictory session, the conference was the best organized and managed international rock art event I have ever attended. All in all, it was a most-rewarding and professionally produced conference".

Some of the important recommendations made at the end of the conference include: (a) that all states should take active action in promoting rock art research and education at all levels; (b) research outcomes of rock art studies must be a tool for promoting cultural education and policy; (c) while carrying out research and documentation on rock art, ethics of documentation, magnitude and significance of the site, its sanctity, and the values, customs, and beliefs of the surrounding communities associated with the site should be taken into consideration; (d) standard guidelines and methodologies to carry out holistic research and documentation of rock art should be formulated. While formulating these, regional variations may also be taken into account; (e) there is an urge for protection, preservation, and conservation of many rock art sites so a separate policy for their protection and preservation has to be developed; (f) to achieve this, collaboration and coordination between major stakeholders/governments and community participation is strongly recommended; (g) there is a need to establish a Centre for Advance Rock Art Studies. National institutions like IGNCA are strongly recommended to establish this. Through this centre, a central digital data bank on world rock art and advance study of rock art may be developed. Research in the most updated methods of chronology, interpretation, and decoding of rock art will also be done by this centre; (h) it was highly recommended that the ongoing national project of creating a central repository for digitally archiving rock art and other forms of allied art traditions along with study and documentation at IGNCA should be strengthened and extended. Recognizing the genuine concern of these scholars, IGNCA recently established an independent unit for rock art studies.

Rock art is one of our greatest surviving art treasures. It possesses a large body of evidence of human artistic, cognitive, and cultural beginnings. The intrinsic efficacy of rock art lies in its universality of appeal and to sustain it in a manner in which all can discern it. Until the recent past, the content of rock art was much commented on as an indicator of the stage of development of the authors of rock art. But for quite some time now attempts have been made by many scholars to explore the possibility of the proximity



of rock art with the art of many living communities in the world such as indigenous people, aboriginals, tribals, and nomads. India is fortunate in possessing 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 tradition. Therefore, it was a proud privilege for IGNCA to host such an international event of academic merit with an urge to analyse where we stand in the global context especially in terms of rock art studies.

Keeping in mind the rich concentration of rock art in India along with a vibrant living art tradition practiced by several communities across the country, the conference focused on initiating a dialogue between the academia and practicing artists, both from rural and urban areas. The conference was conceived with special attention to interdisciplinary research involving allied disciplines like anthropology, geology, art history etc. that can open new horizons in the study of rock art. The deliberations in the conference sessions were mainly around the themes: Concept and Methodology; Forms Content Context; Interpreting Rock Art; and Documentation and Conservation. The conference was thus divided into different themes, each over-lapping, with an interface and inter-locking with other themes.

It would be worthwhile to mention here that IGNCA has conceived a major academic programme which relates to exploring artistic manifestations emanating from man's primary sense perceptions. Rock art forms a crucial component of this. A detailed account of the conceptual framework and objectives of this project are dealt at length in Chapter 19 by the editor. A huge data base has been compiled in the process of documentation and study related to rock art and its allied subjects since its inception.

IGNCA has, so far, produced nine well received publications under the **IGNCA Rock Art Series**, viz., *Rock Art in the Old World* (ed. Michel Lorblanchet), *Deer in Rock Art of India and Europe* (eds G. Camuri, A. Fossati, Y. Mathpal), *Rock Art in Kumaon Himalaya* (Yashodhar Mathpal), *Rock Art in Kerala* (Yashodhar Mathpal), *Conservation of Rock Art* (ed. B. L. Malla), *Global Rock Art* (eds B.L. Malla and V.H. Sonawane), *Rock Art of Andhra Pradesh: A New Synthesis* (N. Chandramouli, General editor B.L. Malla), *The World of Rock Art: An Overview of Five Continents* (ed. B.L. Malla), and *Rock Art: A Catalogue* (ed. S.S. Biswas). Besides these publications, a brochure in the International Conference on Rock Art 2012 titled *Understanding Rock Art in Context* (ed. B. L. Malla) and a set of postcards on Indian rock art have been published. Also, a CD ROM on 'Rock Art of India' and three DVDs on rock art of Jharkhand, rock art of Ladakh (J&K), and pan-Indian rock art have also been brought out. We have great pleasure now in bringing out the tenth and eleventh publications in this series.

The proceedings of the conference have been published in two volumes. These two volumes contain selected articles representing rock art from all over the world. In the first volume, papers related to concept, methodology, context, documentation, and conservation are included. In the second volume papers related to the interpretation of rock art are included. Some of the papers were read in the absence of the scholars who wrote them on our request; a few selected special lectures which were organized as a part of the circulatory rock art exhibition in different parts of India after the main event



have also been included in these volumes to add to the content and quality of their academic input.

The first paper in Volume I, 'Structure of Art, Structure of Mind' by Emmanuel Anati proposes a structure of the elementary dynamics of the human cognitive system.

S. C. Malik in his paper 'Rock Art: A Universal Creative Act' rightly recommends that rock art qua art has to be seen as an aesthetic and creative activity and it requires an integral and holistic approach to the study of rock art.

N. Chandramouli's paper, 'The Concept of Style in Archaeology and its Application to Rock Art Analysis: A Case Study of the Rock Art of Peninsular India' initiates a 'stylistic' study of the rock art of peninsular India in the light of the pros and cons of the application of this concept.

'A Mark in the Way: Schematic Rock Art and Communication Routes' by Hipólito Collado Giraldo and José Julio García Arranz proposes a functional interpretative model for schematic rock art by studying the relation between communication routes and places chosen.

'Prehistoric-Kalimantan Rock Art as a Visual Study' by Pindi Setiawan describes the methodology for classifying Kalimantan rock art as a visual-language study; how to separate images by the way in which they have been drawn and spread on the walls and are connected with the (cultural) environment.

Somnath Chakraverty and Ruman Banerjee's paper, 'Constructed Landscape in Rock Art: Selection of Visual Space, Arrangement Pattern and Its Symbolic Significance' attempts to delineate the selection criterion, if any, for the space for display of art work, both in rock shelters and the location of the rock canvas in an isolated eco-geographical niche to define a boundary between utilitarian and symbolic space within the given cultural and natural setting.

Zhu Lifeng's paper 'The State of Chinese Rock Art' talks of the sites and subject matter of rock art in China and how they have a close inter-relation with its national culture. Chinese rock art is endowed with precious research value.

The paper 'Dominant Motivational, Thematic and Stylistic Traits in the Rock Art of Eastern India with Special Reference to Southern Bihar and Adjoining Jharkhand' by Awadh Kishore Prasad points towards the prevalence of different motivational, thematic, and stylistic traits in rock art in eastern India.

Patrick Paillet's paper 'Men and Cultures at the End of the Late Ice Age in the North of Perigord: Continuities and Ruptures' highlights how the transformations incarnated in artistic registers testify to the diversity of the Palaeolithic and Epi-palaeolithic trajectories.

Dwipen Bezbaruah in his paper 'Megalithic Monuments and the Context of Rock Art in North-East India' gives the origin and antiquity of the rock art tradition in North East India on the basis of secondary evidence and primary data collected by him.

'Pagoda-Shaped Depictions in Tibetan Rock Art' by Zhang Yasha proposes that those who executed the rock art belonged to the Qiang ethnic tribe, who migrated westwards during 2500-1000 B.P. and made a living by taming horses and hunting wild yaks. Their stories, as demonstrated in rock art, relate to the epic of Gesar.



Tashi Ldawa in his paper 'Spatial Attributes of Petroglyphs of Ladakh' reports only those art forms that are considered exotic, incongruous, and are primarily of the pre-Buddhist period. It is generally believed that the exotic petroglyphs which are mainly found on the trade routes existed from prehistoric times.

K. Rajan's paper 'Rock Art and Its Cultural Context: Recent Evidences in Tamil Nadu' gives a detailed account of the geographical distribution, socio-cultural contexts, themes, and chronological evolution of this rock art form in Tamil Nadu.

B. R. Mani and Shankar Sharma's paper 'Rock Art of Kaimur and its Authors: New Evidences' highlights various aspects of rock art including the subject matter of paintings and engravings belonging to Mesolithic and Chalcolithic periods reported in the recent exploration conducted by the authors in the region on the border of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Zulfiqar Ali Kalhor's paper 'Petroglyphs in Seeta valley, Sindh' interprets the rock carvings of Seeta valley, which is noted for Indus period petroglyphs, where one finds the most interesting petroglyphs of a horned deity with dancers.

Nandini Bhattacharya Sahu and Prabhas Sahu in their paper 'Decorated Rock Shelters of Gavilgarh Hills, District Betul, Madhya Pradesh' report about 18 decorated rock shelters in the ortho-quartzite formations of the Gavilgarh hills, a member of the Satpura range. These shelters contain pictographs and petroglyphs on their walls and ceilings. Seven groups of rock shelters, in different localities over the sprawling hills and cliffs have been identified with a rich variety of pictographs, sometimes superimposed on the engravings, mostly in burnt sienna in red hue and seldom in white.

J. N. Pal in his paper 'Prehistoric Rock Art in Vindhya in Uttar Pradesh and Adjoining Areas, North Central India' gives a synthesis of the life and activities of prehistoric man right from the emergence of man in the middle Gangetic plain and the adjoining Vindhyan plateau to the south of the Gangetic plain.

R. K. Varma in the paper 'Rock Art in North Vindhyan region' highlights the importance of the rock art sites of the northern Vindhyan region, especially those located in undivided Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh in Central India.

The paper 'Inventory of Indian Rock Art: A Multidisciplinary Approach' by B.L. Malla describes IGNCA's project for the survey, documentation, and study of Indian rock art sites with a holistic perspective. It also talks about the methodology adopted for the documentation, which is being done with scientific means in collaboration with local experts and institutions in the areas/zones concerned.

R. C. Agrawal in his paper 'Conservation of Rock Art Sites: Problems and Issues' discusses various aspects of the discipline including the protection of rock shelters and their ecosystems which are an essential aspect of preservation of rock art sites across the world.

In their paper 'An Analysis of the Evaluation and Diagnosis of Environmental Impacts of Rock Art sites of the Guaniguanico Mountain Range', Racso Fernández Ortega, Dany Morales Valdés, Dialvys Rodríguez Hernández and Hilario Carmenate Rodríguez define, enumerate, and characterize the various actions and impacts that affect the state of conservation of this important Cuban heritage.



Devananda Beura in his paper 'Geological Aspects and Management of Rock Art with special Reference to Conservation' recommends that while preserving rock art, the natural settings of the rock surface containing the art, structural elements, composition, texture, and matrix of the rock and geological hazards like earthquakes and land use patterns should be kept in mind.

The paper 'Study and Conservation of Rock Art Sites in Andhra Pradesh: A Botanical Perspective' by M. Raghu Ram provides evidence about the material used for the drawings/paintings and proposes that the painting material was prepared by crushing flowers and fruits.

The articles included in this volume highlight the immense potential that rock art possesses in unraveling the mysteries of the past. The data and the interpretations put forward in this volume by various scholars are comprehensive and analytical. Most of their views are appropriate and hold good promise in terms of recent trends in rock art research and documentation. Some of the contributions give us an insight into the universality of rock art, chronology, physical preservation, conservation of rock art sites, conservation of the geological and environmental atmosphere of some rock sites, management systems, documentation, and making an inventory of rock art sites.

The main focus of the present publication is on recent developments in rock art research, documentation, and preservation. As rock art is an intricate and complex domain covering material and cognitive aspects of culture, a multidisciplinary approach is advocated to decode and understand it in all its dimensions. The role of scholars from different disciplines for the scientific study, documentation, and research in rock art has been highlighted in the volume. The second volume *Rock Art Studies, Volume-II*, covers papers on interpreting rock art.

This illustrated volume aims to boost and promote rock art research. It will not only interest scholars but also the public at large. It is also an important step in the journey of exploring together, globally, the source of creative energies and modes of expression of our ancestors. It will certainly contribute to rectify and enhance our vision of rock art.

Lastly, we would like to record that the views expressed by the scholars in their papers may not be taken as those of the editor or the Centre (IGNCA).



BANSI LAL MALLA

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ART
STUDIES-I

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