

An Overview of Rock Art Studies in Karnataka, India

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Abstract

The occurrence of human and animal figures displaying various kinds of day-to-day activities like hunting, gathering, pastoral lifestyle etc., are pictographs or petroglyphs or geoglyphs on the rock surface. Such examples of rock art provide visual representation of a particular place, particular time, and the authors responsible. Rock art plays a vital role in the study of human beliefs and practices, especially of prehistoric cultures. Rock art continued during historic times and is practiced even today by a few communities. It is widely known that rock art was one of the mediums to communicate and represent an understanding of the surroundings; it also reflects ritualistic beliefs and ideas of the past populations. Therefore, rock art is an indispensable source of information in our understanding of some aspects of prehistoric life that is usually not known from other kinds of prehistoric material evidence.

Introduction

Other than the regions of south-western Europe, Russia, North Africa and Australia; India is a major region of rock art in the global context and the country is placed as the biggest centre for rock art in Asia. Indian rock art sites are known for their uniqueness and for its comprehensive communication (Brooks and Wakankar 1976; Chakravarty and Bednarik 1997). In magnitude, vividness, and richness this art form offers substantial source material for our study and perhaps 'the only consistent record left of the developing human mind' (Bednarik 2002). A dense rock art concentration is found in the Vindhyan range, the eastern part of India and in the peninsular region where art is found in the form of pictographs and petroglyphs. In the global context, India as a whole and Karnataka in particular, as a part are known for a large number of discoveries and appreciation of prehistoric and protohistoric rock art.

In India, Karnataka has the largest concentration of rock art followed by Madhya Pradesh. In Karnataka, more than 250 rock art sites have been reported (Fig. 1). Here, an attempt has been made to present an overview of rock art research in Karnataka on the basis of the geographical location of rock art zones like river basins, doab, central, coastal and south Karnataka.

The first reported discovery of rock art in Karnataka, which happened to be the first such reported occurrence in Southern India, was made by Fawcett at Kappagallu near Ballari in 1892. Robert Bruce Foote (1916) also briefly addressed the Kappagallu rock art pictures in his book on 'The Foote Collection of Indian Prehistoric and Protohistoric antiquities, Notes on their Ages and Distributions'.

The Malaprabha River Basin

Early research on rock art in the Malaprabha Basin began in the last quarter of the 20th century. Wakankar explored the Badami region in 1976 (Brooks and Wakankar 1976). This

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Rock Art Studies The Poststylistic Era Or Where Do We Go From Here

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