

ROCK PAINTING OF BAGDARA KALAN (SINGRAULI DISTRICT) NORTH CENTRAL INDIA

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Introduction

Rock art was the first medium by which human's expression of his mind on the wall of rock shelter & caves. In the other term, painted and engraved walls of caves & rock shelter present us with a word of symbols/images and an avenue to walk through archaic expressions of human societies as well as their culture and traditions (Wakankar & Brooks 1976). From palaeolithic to early historic times a large number of rock paintings were made by modern human in many parts of the world include in India.

Early rock paintings are associated with the prehistoric time phase i.e. from Upper palaeolithic onwards. The first reported cave paintings were found in 1870 in Altamira, Spain by Don Marcelino, these paintings were dated to Magdalian cultural phase of Upper Palaeolithic Europe which was dated between 17000 to 12000 BC (Guset user 2015).

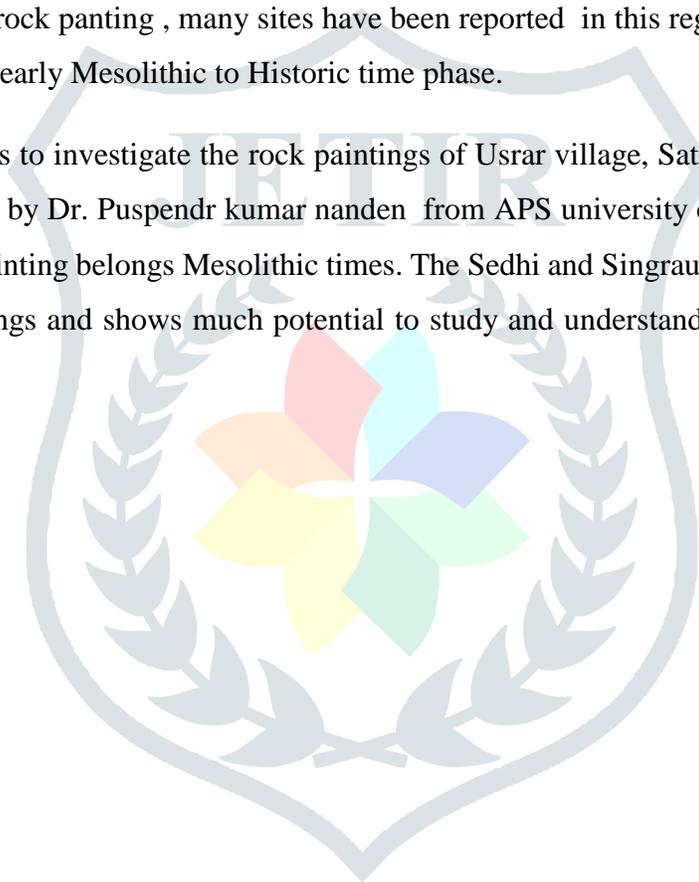
After Altamira discovery, many other rock painting sites were discovered in the other part of world like a Africa, south America, Australia and India.

In Indian context, in Central Indian plateau region, series of narratives in the rock art imagery imply several conspicuous stages of culture such as: - forest based hunting – gathering and foraging nomads in early level being succeeded by pastoralists. Later stage includes rural community with use of wheels and animal power for transportation. Finally, during early historic phase, the most common visual imagery contains elaborate elements depicting the conflict between two groups. In such confrontation of metal weapons, horses and elephants are more common. Such battle scenes were not prevalent in Deccan plateau or in southern peninsular India. In southern India, majority of rock art sites are related to Megalithic burials. Recent explorations have traced visual materials on ethnic conflict in Nilgiri Hills, Tamil Nadu. In Jharkhand, rock art is intimately associated to the

folklore and myth of 'Kohbar' or marriage booth of a legendary royal bridal couple. The archaeological background of rock art in the same plateau region is somehow related to the megalithic burial system which is still being practiced among major tribal communities in the same milieu. The analytical study on naturalistic or realistic figurative detail in rock art discerns that the social organization, economy and culture represented in the majority of rock art sites are almost identical to the tribal and other pre-urban societies that retained their oral tradition. Therefore a set of methodology is proposed to outline the indigenous tribal history, their traditional attitude, experiences and sentiments reflected in the rock art imagery (Somnath Chakraverty , 2009) .

In the central Indian plateau, Bindhanchal region is very rich in rock painting site. Mostly Baghelkhand & Bundelkhand area are most important place of rock painting sites. In the Bahgelkhand Satna , Sedhi and Reva are very good area to study of rock painting , many sites have been reported in this region which represents to rock art of (upper palaeolithic ?) early Mesolithic to Historic time phase.

The proposed research seeks to investigate the rock paintings of Usrar village, Satna District, Madhya Pradesh. Usrar site was first reported by Dr. Puspendr kumar nanden from APS university of Reva (Nanden 2015). The rock shelter has revealed painting belongs Mesolithic times. The Sedhi and Singrauli district have good number of rock shelters with paintings and shows much potential to study and understand rock art in the north central India.



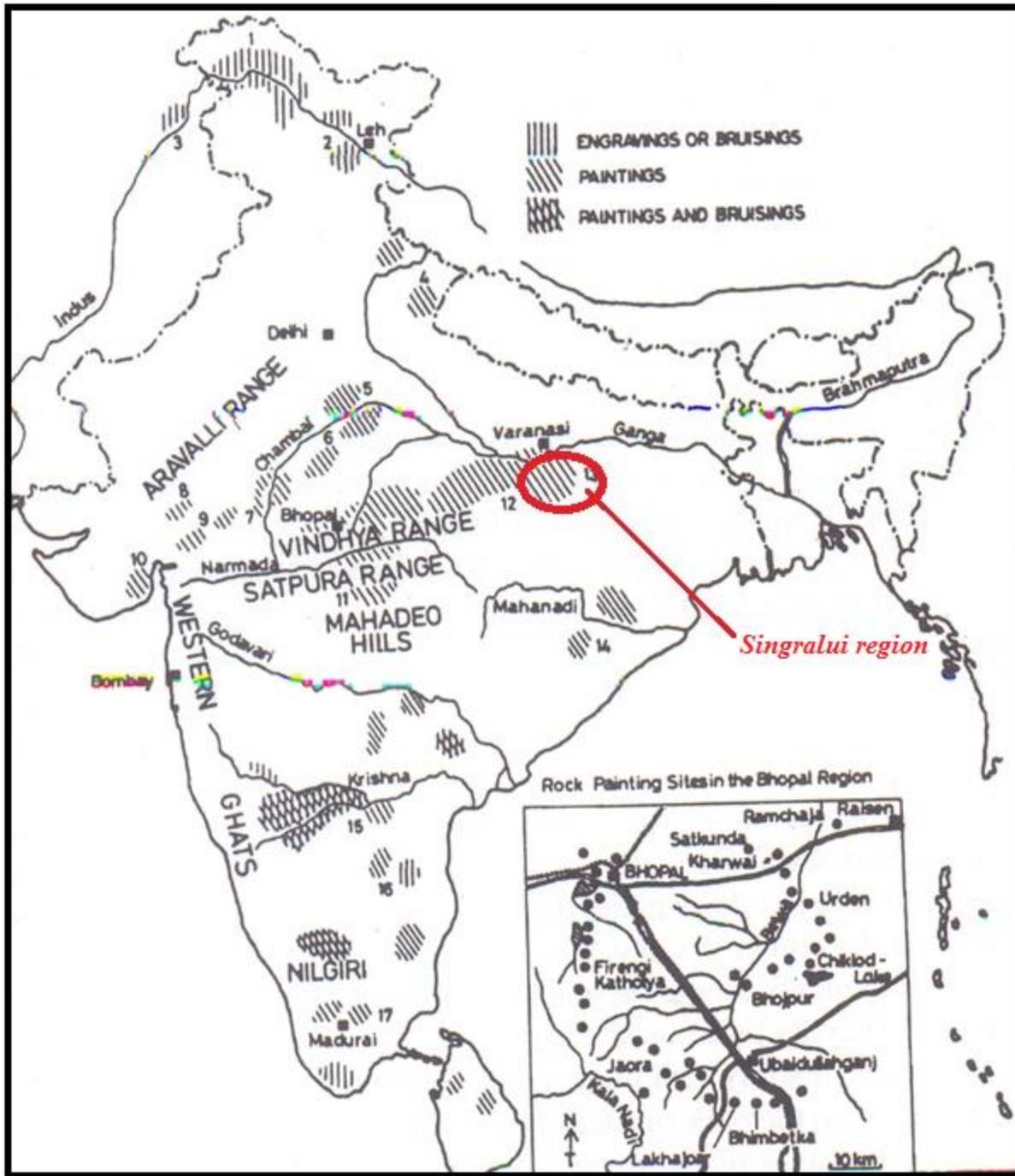


Fig.1 Distribution of rock painting

Chapter II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ROCK ART IN INDIA

Indian subcontinent has seen developments in rock art studies and research patterns, primarily after Independence, though the beginnings were made in 1860's. Official study of Rock art began in 1867-68 with Archibald Carlyle's explorations in the northern Vindhyan ranges. An officer of Archeological Survey of India, Carlyle

was the first to notice, paintings done on the walls of a few shelters, near Sohangihat, which was in forested region of Kaimur ranges in Mirzapur district, Uttar Pradesh.

This was a remarkable and very interesting discovery as it was made twelve years before Marcelino De Santuola's discovery of Altamira caves in Spain, which boasts to be the earliest in the world. In fact, earlier unofficial references of petroglyphs at Almora has been reported by Henwood in 1856 (Pradhan 2001, 3). Coming back to Carlyle, he had not published any account of his discoveries but had left some field notes with his friend R.R Gatty, which were later published in Indian Antiquary by Vincent Smith in 1906 (Smith 1906: 185-95, Pradhan 2001). Noteworthy contribution made by Carlyle was that he related the microliths, pieces of charcoal and red haematite found on the floor of rock shelters with the prehistoric people who made stone implements, thereby concluding that the chronology began in the Stone Age. By analyzing the subject matter of the paintings he realized that all the paintings were not made in the same time but belonged to different ages.

Following these initial beginnings, John Cockburn, an officer of the Opium Department of British Government in 1883 presented the first scientific paper on Indian rock paintings (Cockburn 1899:89-97). It is termed scientific, since he tried to trace the antiquity of the paintings, based on fossilized bones of rhinoceros found in the river valley of Ken, in Mirzapur district, and also a painting showing rhino-hunt found at a shelter near Romp village. Cockburn studied these pictures systematically and produced tracings of quite a few of them, in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.

Unfortunately he had failed to recognize the Paleolithic origins of the rock paintings and he assigned a date not more than 600 to 700 years back (Cockburn 1899: 89-97). Interestingly, in southern India, rock pictures were noticed quite early, though, explicit mention was first made by Fred Fawcett in 1901 (Fawcett 1901:409-21). Fawcett had examined the site of Kupagallu in 1892 and the Edakkal caves in Kozikode district of Kerala in 1890's. Credit goes to him, as he had correctly understood the antiquity of the pictures, unlike Cockburn, and was the first to use photography as a method of documentation. However in 1916 Brace Foote brought to everyone's notice that it was Hubert Knox who had mentioned, rock braising from Karnataka's Bellary district in 1880's. This was prior to Fawcett's discovery (Foote 1916:87-89). The legacy of rock art research in India was further carried on by Francke (1902, 1903,

1925), who had worked at a series of petroglyph sites at lower Ladakh region (Pradhan 2001), C.A Silberrand, a civil service officer by profession, worked in Banda district in 1907, C.W Anderson (1918) studied rock paintings at Singhanpur in Raigarh district in Madhya Pradesh. Percy Brown, an art expert (1917, 1923) and Principal of Art College in Kolkata studied sites of Raigarh. He had attached an artistic label to rock paintings in his book on Indian paintings (Brown 1917: 14-41). In 1921, Manoranjan Ghosh, Curator of Patna Museum, studied the rock art complex of Mirzapur region as well as several sites in Madhya Pradesh, at Raigarh and Adamgarh near Hoshangabad and produced a monograph of Indian rock art in 1932. By this time, first mention of rock art engraving (petroglyph) was made by K.P.Jaiswal in 1933 (Jaiswal 1933: 58-60) in a rock shelter at Vikramkhol

in Sundargarh district of Orissa, now in Jharsuguda district (Pradhan 2001). More engravings were later brought to light in India, from bank of river Indus, Kupgallu hill near Bellary and Gotgiri Bettaridge near Bangalore (Gordon 1958: 116). In 1930's, G.R.Hunter and D.H Gordon noticed painted shelters of Mahadeo hills. Gordon contributed to several journals, tackling important issues related to rock art, like superimpositions, thematic and technological content, styles etc between 1935 and 1950. He actually attempted to develop a scientific base supporting chronology of the paintings. One major limitation of Gordon's work was that he tried to bind all Indian rock art pictures available, based on his study of only one site, which is Mahadeo hills. However Gordon's book 'Prehistoric Background of Indian Culture' (1958) offered a brilliant introduction to rock art and gained much popularity amongst archeologists and researchers. Mention needs to be made of another noteworthy contribution by A. H. Brodriek, who has tried to compare and place Indian paintings in a global perspective (Brodriek 1948).

This was primarily the research of rock art as carried out before achievement of India's independence. Unfortunately, much of this early work was hampered by Euro centric preconceptions of the English archeologists. Fawcett and Carlylle saw this art form as merely pre historic. Cockburn believed it only to be a few centuries old. Chronology of rock paintings which was prepared by Gordon was affected, too, by his concepts on foreign influence. It was only after 1947 that researchers made arduous efforts to establish an indigenous research tradition for India, free of European thoughts and assumptions (Bednarik 2002; 356). This saw large-scale excavations being carried out at rock art sites. First three decades of post-independence experienced a change in concepts of rock art studies, and this change though slow was gradual. Excavations began at various rock art sites like Piklihal by Allchin in 1960, at Tekklakota by Nagaraja Rao and Malhotra in 1965 (Bednarik 2002; 357). Since then, more than 5000 shelters have been reported from all corners of Indian subcontinent.

A grand new chapter of rock art research in India was unfolded with emergence of V.S Wakankar. He added an entirely new dimension to this field of study, and truly deserves to be honored with the title as 'Founder of modern rock art studies in India' While traveling to Nagpur from Bhopal in a train, Wakankar had noticed dissected rocks, resembling archeological monuments over a sandstone hill. This led to discovery of Bhimbetka in 1957 near Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh, one of the best-known sites in the world with largest concentrations of rock paintings. Wakankar (Wakankar 1975, 1992; Wakankar & Brooks 1976) in an effort to date the paintings at Bhimbetka analyzed superimposition sequences. In doing this he concluded that the sequence of superimposition began with peculiar green dynamic human figures, which belonged to Upper Paleolithic period. He supported his observation by excavating green nodules from a tool-bearing layer, which was of Upper Palaeolithic period. However G.S.Tyagi (Tyagi 1992) much later had concluded that green figures were preceded by geometric patterns, which were complex in form called 'intricate patterns'. In the process of such studies centering Bhimbetka project, public awareness of this site was heightened, in turn making rock art a major discipline for study. Wakankar had carried out a broad survey of painted shelters in the country along with listing of chronology based on style, content and superimposition, and also its archeological context in historical perspective. With his

work he successfully laid the foundations to an Indian homegrown research tradition of rock art studies. Wakankar, together with R.R.Brooks had published 'Stone Age Paintings in India' (Wakankar & Brooks 1975).

Many other competent rock art specialists who worked during the 1970's were Jagadish Gupta, who presented the Hindi version of comprehensive study of rock art (1967), R.K Varma (1964), S.K.Pandey (1969), Bridget Allchin (1958), J.Jacobson (1970) and later Yashodhar Mathpal (Mathpal 1984, 1995). Recent years saw a lot of development with Shankar Tiwari (1976) of Bhopal discovering quiet a number of sites around Bhopal. Erwin Neumayer (Austria) 1983, 1993, S.K Pandey of Sagar University, Somnath Chakraverty of Calcutta University, A.Sundara of Karnataka University, K.K Chakravarty of Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Delhi, Giriraj Kumar of Dayalbagh Institute, Agra, V.H Sonawane of M.S University, Baroda, Rakesh Tiwari of U.P. State Archeological Organization, S. Pradhan of Utkal University, N.Chandramouli of Telegu University, Morarilal Sharma of Government P.G.College, Kotputali, Jeewan Kharakwal of Institue of Rajasthan Studies, Udaipur, K.Rajan of Tamil University, Thanjavur, B.L. Malla of Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, New Delhi, Gajendra Tyagi, R.K Pancholi, Meenakshi Dubey and Sudha Malaiya. Foreign scholars who took a lot of interest in research of rock art of India and made substantial contributions in postindependence period was R.R Brooks (U.S.A) Erwin Neumayer (Austria), R.G Bednarik (Australia) and Michel Lorblanchet (France).Late 1980's saw a major development in rock art studies. By this time Indian rock art research was completely free from earlier euro-centric notions and emerged to be a mature tradition, welcoming foreign researchers to work with Indian researchers on collaborative projects. Indian rock art was now being placed on a global context. Mention needs to be made of K.K Chakrabarty's and Bednarik's volume on this subject (Chakravarty & Bednarik, 1997). The foundation of 'The International Federation of Rock Art Organizations' (IFRAO) in 1988 helped Indian researchers to place their goals and strategies in an international forum. On 3rd December 1988, Rock Art Research Association (IRA) was formed at Santiniketen, West Bengal. Following this, foundations of a second organization were laid by scholars and named as Rock Art Society of India (RASI). Regular conferences and seminars are conducted by RASI members along with publication of a journal named 'Purakala', containing research papers to encourage future researchers of our country and abroad.



Fig.1 Location of Bagdara Kalan site (In red circle)

Chapter III

Study Area: Geomorphological & Environmental Setting

Almost the entire Singrauli district lies on the Vindhyan plateau, which extends from the Kaimur hill range in the south to the edge of the Ganga valley in the north. Maximum elevation of the district is 609 m above mean sea level. The southern and northern fringes of the district lie low in the respective valleys of the Son and the Yamuna rivers. (district ground water information booklet 2013). The Bagdara kalan village is part of the Kaimur hill series. The climate of Singrauli district is characterized by a hot summer with general dryness, except during the south-west monsoon season. The normal annual rainfall of Satna district is 1014.1 mm. The district receives maximum rainfall during south-west monsoon period (i.e. June to September) and about 87.7% of annual rainfall is received during this period.

ROCK PANTINGS FROM BAGDARA KALAN

Bagdara kalan (N24°29'58.02'', E82°31'51.45'') is a small village which is surrounded by Kaimor hill and Son river, the rock painting site is located 2-3 km north from the village on the hill Slope rock shelter. In the hill slope many small and big size rock shelters were found but rock painting was found in only two of the large shelters. These rock shelter opens towards west side and the height of the rock shelters have been measured between is 20 to 25 ft, width 15 to 20ft & length 35 to 50 ft.

Rock painting appears on the shelter wall, all paintings are broadly classified into three different phases in this region. The first phase is the Mesolithic followed by the Neolithic & Chalcolithic. We do not have any perfect dating of this shelter. Therefore the classification of the rock paintings is based on the style of painting and patina associated with the paintings. A good number of paintings in the shelter are covered with patina indicating their antiquity. And patina based rock paintings are considered to be of the Mesolithic period in this study.

Rock shelter .1

This rock shelter face is towards west side and height of the shelter have been measured between 18 to 24 ft , width between 15 to 17 ft and length 35 to 38 ft. All paintings are belong Mesolithic time phase in this rock shelter. High patination appears on the paintings.

Mesolithic rock time phase

On the left side of the wall of the shelter, very good rock paintings appear, which covered from the patina belong to Mesolithic time phase(fig.4,5&6). The Sambhar group on the wall was drawn by dark red color , outline of Sambhar figure was made very broad . at The bottom side of Sambhar group there is another group of Sambhar painting in which middle part of the each Sambhar was drawn by crass sketching pattern , Apart from the Sambhar and deer paintings, a scene depicting of humans hunting Sambher with bow and arrow was also present on the wall. Some deer group painting appear on shelter wall which were drawn in dark red color and dot patterns were used to fulfill the center part of deer , some another wild big group painting was drawn in the wall which were in dark red color and intricate pattern was used to decorate central part of the body. Some human groups, human palm print, Monkey, Boar and peacock can be seen on the wall which is in very small size. No evidence was found of superposition type rock painting and around this shelter good number of Microlithic tools have been found.

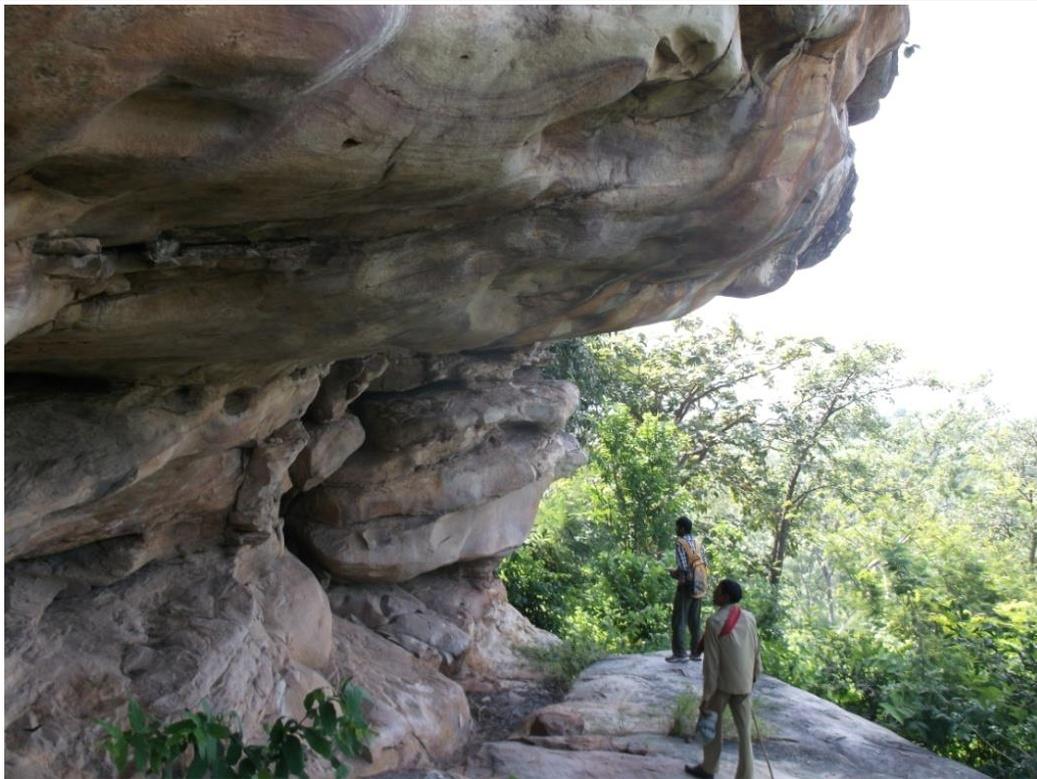


Fig.3 General view of shelter No.1



Fig.3 Sambhar painting in shelter No.1



Fig.4 Animal skin painting



Fig.5 Humn group celebrating ritual event (Chalcolithic & Neolithic)

Rock Shelter .2

This rock shelter is approximately 2 K.m. west side from Rock shelter number one, rock shelter face is towards west side and height of the shelter have been measured between 20 to 25 ft, width between 18 to 20 ft and length 45 to 50 ft. All paintings appear on upper side of shelter wall and belong Neolithic time phase in this rock shelter.

Neolithic & Chalcolithic time phase rock painting

A large number of Neolithic & Chalcolithic paintings are also present which were executed in the light red colour on the shelter wall. All these paintings are different from the Mesolithic rock painting in their stylistic aspects. Mostly Neolithic & Chalcolithic rock paintings appear on the top portion of the wall.

Many religious ritual types rock paintings, holy symbol and animal skin art, human group dance, setting human and Geometric art can be seen (fig 7). In some seen group of woman are holding baby in hand participating some religious function (fig. 8&9) these types paintings are belong to Neolithic & Chalcolithic society.



Fig.7 General View of rock shelter No.2 (Paintings in red circle)



Fig.8 General view of rock paintings, shelter No.2



Fig.9 Ritual activity paintings



Fig.8 Microlithic stone tools from surface near the rock shelter No.1

Animal Figures		Paintings Human Figures	
Monkey	5+	Human	70+
Lizard	2		
Boar	1		
Animal skin figure	40+	Human palm	2
Deer	2+		
Wild buffaloes	7+	Human foot print	1
Peacock	3+		
Sambhar	50+		
TOTAL FIG-183+			

FIG.8 Total figures

Group of Animal and bird		human Activitey	
Grop of deer	1	Group of human	1
Group of wild pig	1	Hunting pic	3
Group of sambhar	3	Group dance	2
Peacock	1		

FIG.9 Total activity

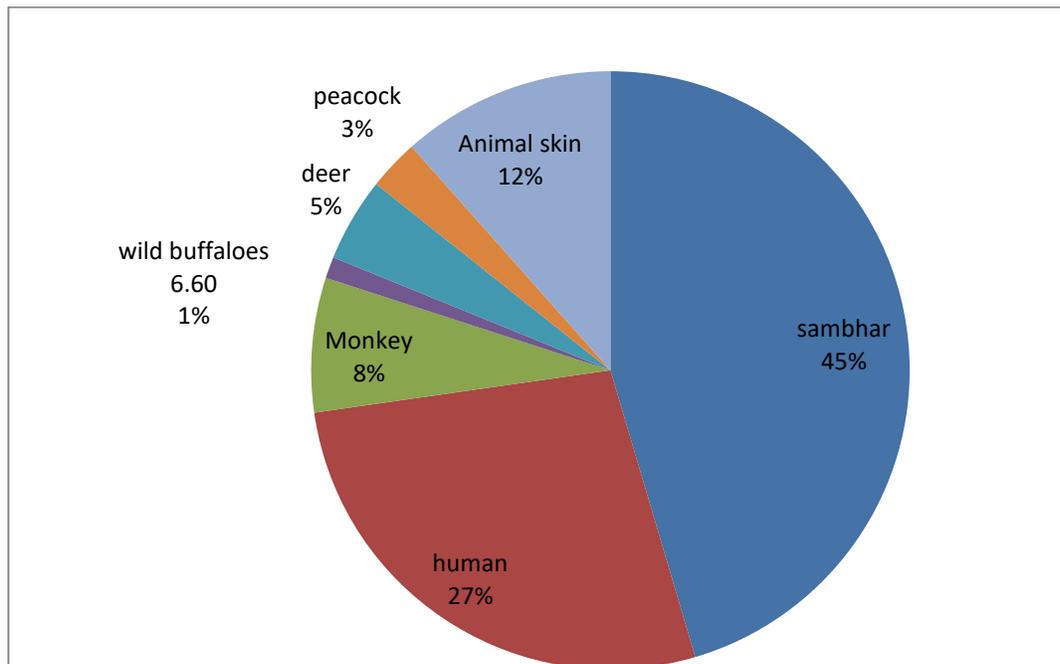


Fig.10 Pie of total rock painting in shelter one and shelter two

Stone artifacts

Good number of stone artifacts has been recovered from surface, near to the rock shelter (fig.8). Mostly stone tools are related Mesolithic tools technology. Various type of Mesolithic tools like Micro blade, Lunate and blade scrapers etc has been found. These tools were helpful to Mesolithic community for daily activity like a hunting, making wood and bone artifacts as well as scrapping Animal skin etc.

Conclusion

North-central India is very important region to study rock paintings. Many rivers, forest and rock shelter . Sandstone formations being prone to natural erosion and weathering, the passage of time and the exposure to natural elements have led to the various shaped rock shelters as we know them now, with their unique natural architecture, these rock sheltars were good place of settlement for Mesolithic and Neolithic people.

A large number of rock paintinges sites have been reported in the Baghelkhand region. Dharkundi, majhgema , brhaspati kund and usrar all these sites have good evidence of rock painting belonging to the Mesolithic period onwards. Among these Bagdara kalan rock paintings is one of the most imortant rock painting in Sidhi and Sengrauli region because of the style and chornology of painting. The Bagdara rock paintings represent

Mesolithic to Chalcolithic life style activity. Neolithic and chalcolithic type rock painting are associated with the humped bull/domesticated animals, group dance etc. and good number of Neolithic type rock paintings can be seen in Bagdara rock shelter. As well as hunting and other scenes involving wild animals which are generally regarded as belonging to the Mesolithic period can be seen in rock shelter.

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