



# Chalaparakona: The rock art site near Kushasthali River in Andhra Pradesh

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## Abstract

*Chalaparakona is a newly discovered rock art site located 3 km towards south to Mudipalli village in Nagari mandal of Chittoor district in Andhra Pradesh. The rock art is identified in a naturally formed rock shelter in limestone hillock nearer to Kushasthali River. The rock art consists several images belongs to human, animal, religious, geometric and other unidentified drawings in a withered condition. The early human used red and reddish brown as well as white pigments for drew the images. The rock art in this rock shelter shows the continuity of the artistic expressions through various archaeological periods up to the contemporary period. The present paper discusses about the rock art based on the observations of images found in chalaparakona rock shelter. This paper will also give the information about the available archaeological assemblages located nearer to this rock art site.*

**Keywords:** Rock art, Jaina sculptures, Pre and Proto historic assemblages.

## INTRODUCTION

Rock art is the symbolic representation of socio-cultural, socioeconomic, socio-political and socio-religious aspects of the past communities (Reddy T.B 2013). The term rock art is popularly used to define prehistoric art in the form of paintings, brushings and engravings on bare rock surfaces of caves and rock shelters and on isolated rock boulders in the open air (Chandramouli, 2003; Reddy T.B 2013). The early people left the evidences of their living conditions through the artistic expressions in the caves, rock shelters and open boulders. The available evidences suggest that the early human used the natural caves and rock shelters as their abodes. The researchers identified several rock arts which were drawn by the early human at caves and rock shelters around the globe. The early human used the natural dyes majorly red, white and black and along with other few pigments for paintings. The ethno archaeological studies reveal that the early people prepared the

dyes by the mixing of naturally available minerals, herbals and animal substances obtained in their surrounding environment.

The first discovery of rock art site in India was reported by Henwood in 1856 and the first petroglyphs were recorded by Archibald Carlleyle in 1867-1868 at Almora, Mirzhapur District in Uttar Pradesh. After that several scholars conducted several explorations across Indian continent for discovering the rock art site for find actual reasons behind the rock art cultures. The discovery of early paintings in Bhimbetka by V.S Vakankar (1950) the importance of rock art research grown across India and due to this importance on rock art the Bhimbetka rock shelters became UNESCO world heritage site in 2003.

In Andhra Pradesh, the paintings of early human were identified at several places belongs to the people of Mesolithic phase, Neolithic phase, megalithic phase and historical phase. The identified comprises animals of deer species, rabbit, porcupine, tortoise, fox, hyena, dog etc. Several human figures and Anthropomorphs, masked human figures, geometric and non-geometric figures, palm impressions, petroglyphs belongs to Neolithic period and zoomorphic and anthropomorphic elements belongs to megalithic period were identified. Among all the sites found in Andhra Pradesh, Pudicherla, Kethavaram in Kurnool district, Chintagunta in Kadapa district have a well preserved rock paintings of past people.

In Chittoor district, Ramabrahmam. V; Ramana B.V; Babji Reddy.T and Harshavardhan identified some rock art sites inside the caves, rock shelters, megalithic burials and open rock surfaces at Talakona, Chittecherla, Gundalabayalu, Jandla, Marella, Cherlopalli, Madanapalli, Simhamgundlu near Sadum, Mallaiahpalli, Tirumala, Kanyakaladona, Ubbalamadugu etc., are the explored rock art sites in Chittoor, Tirupat and Annamayya districts. However there is a need to explore other remaining rock art sites which are hidden in the hills, hillocks and reserve forest.

#### **ABOUT THE ROCK ART SITE 'CHALAPARAKONA'**

The rock paintings were identified at a lime stone rock shelter locally known 'Chalaparakona' at a distance of 3 km from Mudipalli village in Nagari mandal of Chittoor district in Andhra Pradesh, India. The name Chalaparakona derived from the name of goddess Chalaparamma because the goddess Chalaparamma temple is located very close to this cave. The local people offer animal sacrifices during auspicious occasions to this goddess. They also offer prayers at inside the cave. The Paleolithic tools are identified nearer to this site. The surroundings have the historical remains from 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.



*Rock shelter which having the rock art*

### **Rock art in Chalaparakona**

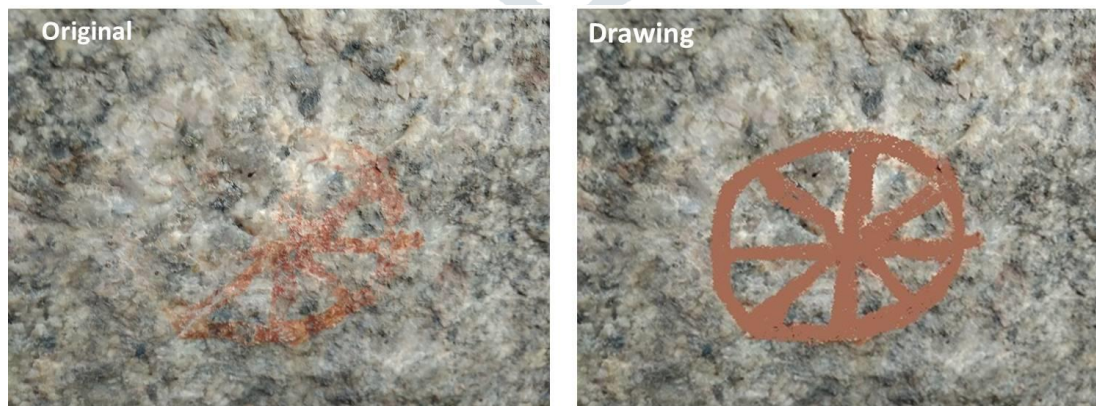
The paintings in the rock shelter at Chalaparakona majorly occupied in red pigment and a very few in white. All the paintings are fully faded and a few paintings in a little bit better condition. The paintings are not clearly visible in photographs. The direct visibility of paintings is better than photographs. A few paintings are identified as tridents, circles, wheels, palm tree, sheep, and human row holding each other's hands and some unknown shapes are also observed. In a separate scene a tall human is in a walking posture, and he holding a hand of another small human, its looks like a parent walking by holding his child's hand. The images of parent and child walking postures painted repeatedly in five times one below one. Some parents hold his child's left hand with his right hand and some figures shows that the parent holds his child's right hand with his left hand. The same scenes repeated in two separate instances.



*Human figures showing a parent holding his child's hand in walking posture*

The wheels painted in Chalaparakona have similarities with the wheels painted in Mallaiahpalli and Sundupalli megalithic burials. The human figures are also having similarities with Mallaiahpalli megalithic art. Based on the similarities between the above said sites, the rock art of chalaparakona is belongs to megalithic period.

The imitation of the old paintings are again painted by later people is clearly visible at this rock art site. In the below given pictures the wheel image is copied by the modern societies and used lime, turmeric, saffron and charcoal for drawing the as it is wheel of the old.



Red ochre wheels



Copying of old image by modern people

### **Historic and Pre-historical places around Kushasthali River**

Kushasthali River is also known Kortalaiyar River, Kosasthalaiyar River and Nagari River. This river flows 136 km and hosts several historic and prehistoric remains along with its coast. The archaeological important places are Nagateertham, Mudipalli, Satrawada, therani, Kannikapuram, Nagari, Nindra, Narayanavanam and Tiruthani. These are the nearest places located around the present discussing rock site.

**Nagateertham:** This site is situated at a hillock locally known Nagateertham konda near Mudipalli village at a distance of 2 km north ward to the rock art site and 1 km from Mudipalli village. It is naturally formed rock shelter and having the remains of Jaina and Hindu belief. The early studies reveal that the existence of Jainism is prevalent in this region even before the entry of the Mauryan authority in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. At early stages Jaina monks were lived in natural caves or rock shelters. Thus these natural caves are associated with Jainism. It is observed that different people have worshiped different gods in this place in different periods.



*Relief sculpture of Jaina monk on stone boulder at Nagateertham cave*

Based on the observations of different carvings found in the Nagateertham cave reveals that several centuries ago (may be 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD) initially the Jaina monks lived in this rock shelter and carved the Jaina god image. The later people worship this image as 'Nagadevatha' (snake god) because the snake hoods is having on the head of image. The later people were also carved the serpents on natural rock inside this shelter for snake worship. The writings in Tamil language are also found in this rock shelter. According to this writings the serpents were carved in the year 1894 CE. The serpent is the symbolic representation of Lord Siva in this regard the devotees of Lord Siva installed the Linga inside this cave. The worship of Sapthamatrukas has been also appear in the Nagateertham rock shelter. The remains of terracotta shreds and the carvings of the foot prints of sister goddess evidently revealing about the worship of *Sapthamatrukalu*.



## Sacred serpent images in Nagateertham rock shelter and Tamil inscription(1894 AD)



*Foot print carvings of Sapthamatruka (seven sister goddesses)*

Satrawada is another Jain place which is located at beside the river Kushasthali at a distance of 8 km from this rock art site. The inscription of Vijayanagara period is also found in Satrawada.

**Thumburu:** Thumburu is a small village located 20 km from this rock art site. The ruined Jain temple is identified in the Thumburu pond. The temple faces west and the idol of Jain faces north. There are other Jain places located at Kannikapuram, Nidra and Nagari at nearer to this rock art site. The remains of Jain show that in the past the Jainism was flourished in this region.

**Mudipalli:** The old name of this village was Munipalli. The meaning of muni is monk. In the past the monks was resided in this village, hence, named this village as Munipalli and later it called as Mudipalli. The ancient temple namely Kariyamanikya Varadaraja Perumal Temple is located in this village. It is Vaishnavite temple with Dravidian architecture.



*Stone slab inscription in Tamil and Grantha, dated 1426 A.D. at Mudipalle village.*

Mudipalli was referred as one of the boundaries of the land gifted to the temple of Subramanya at Tirrutani by Parantaka Chola I (907-952 CE) in his Velanjeri copper plates. In the grant Mudipalli was referred as an *agrahara* with Brahminical settlements.

A stone slab with an inscription erected in front of the temple. According to the villagers the stone slab was brought from the lake behind the temple where it was located earlier. The inscription is engraved on both sides of the stone slab belongs to 1426 CE. The inscription is in Tamil and Sanskrit languages written in Tamil and Tamil Grantha characters. It records the grant of land of half a *kuli* for the merit of Devaraya-Udaiyar, by Pradhani Arasar Kopparasar, the agent of Mahapradhani Devaraya-Udaiyar during the reign of Pratapa-Devaraya and by the Mahajanas with the stipulation that the gifts of land should be utilized for desilting the lake at Mudipalli *agaram*. The ancient Saivite temples namely Agastheeswara temple is also found in Mudipalli village.

There is another historical Vaishnavite temple namely Vaikuntanatha swamy temple is located 6 km from this rock art site at Therani village beside the river Kushasthali. This temple was constructed during 16<sup>th</sup> Century by Therani Nadadur Sudarsanachary, a Pandit in the royal court of the Karvetinagaram during Vijayanagara Empire.

**Narayanavanam:** It is located at a distance of 20 km from Chalaparakona. Narayanavanam Narayanavanam is one of the territorial divisions of Chola kingdom known “Kunra vattana kottam” in “Vattiyuranadu”. The temple at Narayanavanam is dedicated to Kalyana Venkateswara, because it is asserted that Vishnu here married the daughter of King Akasa Raja. This temple is situated on bank of the River Arani River. It is the native place of Saluva-the second dynasty of emperors to rule Vijayanagar. The inscription found in this temple revealing about the history of this region. An inscription in the reign of Achyutaraya dated A.D. 15160 records



that Virupanna constructed the temple and gifted some villages for offerings to the temple. Another inscription dated A.D.162261 refers to the gift of tolls made by a mercantile community to the temple. An inscription dated A.D.162362 refers to gift of a village by Tirumalaraya son of Srirangaraya for offerings and celebrating festivals.

Several historic and prehistoric remains are noticed along the sides of Kushasthali River. The important Palaeolithic site namely Attirampakkam is located beside Kushasthali River at a distance of 55 km from this rock art site. In 1863, Rober Bruce Foote the father of Indian prehistory was first discovered the Attirampakkam prehistoric site. Later William King, Paterson T.T, Krishnaswami V.D and Banerjee K.D have conducted research on Attirampakkam site. Recently Shanthi Pappu and Kumar Akhilesh have conducting excavations at Attirampakkam. According to Luminescence dating methods, the stone artifacts of middle palaeolithic period found at Attirampakkam was used by prehistoric human for 3, 85,000 years ago. So this region has human continuity from more than 3.85 thousand years.

## CONCLUSION

The rock art found at Chalaparakona reveals about the social, economic and religious aspects of the past people. The paintings are fully faded due to weathering conditions but a few paintings are remained for reconstruction of the past. The images found in the rock art showing the caring of children, hunting of animals and beliefs. The circles and a few human images have similarities with the paintings found in Mallaiahpalli megalithic paintings. The river Kushasthali is also hosts several prehistoric and historic remains. Based on the historic and prehistoric evidences found around this rock art site shows the human continuity from the past to the present.

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