

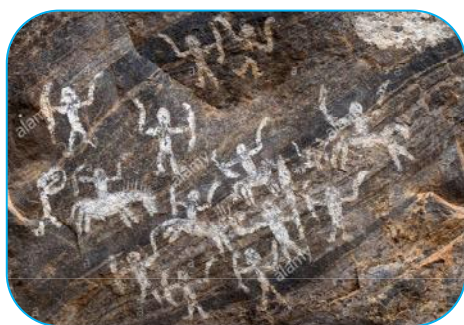


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STUDY OF ROCK PAINTINGS IN TAMILNADU WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PRE AND PROTO HISTORIC PERIOD

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ABSTRACT:

The Rock paintings in Tamilnadu have a vital role in the history of Tamilnadu. It is authentic sources to know about pre and proto historic people. Some time the paintings may have been exaggerated but it is not taken into account however we should realize their imagination and way of presentation on their daily routine life history. It was another advance development of the people which means the stone tools to the paintings. The people had used their skill and technique for the painting because they considered it must be

survival very long time to the posterity. It was the first media for early man to express and convey his ideas on rock shelters abutting forest areas. The study of Rock paintings has two major aspects. Firstly, it is a science through which we try to find out its meaning, its social character which is valuable for defining cultures and historical phases and religious psychology. Secondly, it is equally significant for the insight it gives into the aesthetic values.

KEYWORDS: *Rock paintings, life history, historical phases.*

INTRODUCTION

The meaning of Rock paintings is images depicted with paint on the rock. The images were depicted in red and white but the white ochre is predominantly found which is compared to red ochre. The paintings are depicted on the rock shelters, caves and boulders and it is also depicted on the Megalithic dolmen. The shelters and caves are located on mountain and hilly regions meanwhile the boulders are located on the plain land. The hundreds of Rock paintings sites are located within the Tamilnadu. Each one has

provided with different theme, style and technique. The images are naturally depicted in silhouetted and decorative style. The images have drawn either single or double colours (it may be red or white ochre). If it is found only by a single colour means it is called as monochrome meanwhile the image has depicted with double colour (both red and white ochre) means as polychrome. However, majority of the paintings are found in monochrome. The paintings are superimposed i.e. the images have been depicted one over the other. It is indicating that the early human was continuously occupied for a long time. The images are depicted with X-ray

motif. It is clearly showing the inner organs of the animal and human. The images of megalithic burial structures are depicted on the rock shelter and dolmen.

ROCK ART RESEARCH IN TAMILNADU

The first rock paintings were discovered at Mallapadi presently in Krishnagiri District in 1978 (Raman, 2006: 34) by Prof Raman, Head in department of Archaeology, University of Madras. He has also conducted the excavations in the same site and it is revealed that the earliest occupation belongs to the Megalithic culture but with some lingering traits of the Neolithic culture (Raman, 1977-78: 50). In continuation of this discovery,

the rock paintings at Kilvalai in Viluppuram District were discovered by Burgur Kuppasamy, teacher from Pondicherry (Sridhar 2005:18). There after many scholars have discovered the paintings in the same district but large number of paintings are found along with symbols and sings only in Kilvalai. Prof Rajan has explored in and around Krishnagiri district and discovered about ten sites with rock paintings (Rajan 1991:37). Among the sites, Prof Rajan, Athiyaman and Jayakumar, the department of Archaeology, Tamil University, Thanjavur has conducted the excavation at Myladumparai, presently in Krishnagiri district. A total five trenches and one Megalithic burial were excavated. These five trenches and the Megalithic burial yielded cultural deposits ranging from Mesolithic times to the Early Historic period (Rajan, 2004: 77). Dr. Dayalan (Rtd from ASI) of the Chennai circle of the survey, during the course of exploration, he has discovered the paintings on a boulder within the fortification walls at Thirumayam in Pudukottai district (Dayalan, 1987-88: 142). Dr. Kumar (late) has explored in Vellore district and discovered the rock paintings sites (Kumar 2010: 147-151). Many scholars like Poundurai, R. Vasanthi, C. Gandhirajan, K.T. Samy, P.L. Duraisamy, P and Madhivanan were published their works only in journals and books particularly in Tamil language.

Presently the author of this paper has explored and it was taken detailed study on the Rock paintings of Tamilnadu. Each and every site is providing valuable information which is pertaining to pre and proto historic period. Some of the observation is going to discuss below.

SITES DESCRIPTION

Vellarykombai (N 11 ° 21 354 • E 076 ° 53 791 •) is located about 4kms from the Village Vellerykombai, a Kurumba hamlet, located 16km from Kotagiri in a taluk of Nilgiri district. The granite stone of the shelter is blackish in colour with roughened surface and the texture is too hard. The shelter is located on north – south orientation and it is also facing towards east. The height of the shelter is about from 5 feet to 35 feet in height and 125 feet in length. The area fully is covered with mountain ranges and thick forest. The paintings are depicted on the wall of the shelter. The colours of the images are both red and white ochre. The paintings are superimposed (the younger paintings have been drawn over the older paintings). It is indicating as in occupied for a long time. The images of human and animal are depicted. The human images have shown with different features. The head has conical in shaped with number of line marks. It is looking like mask or headdress (fig no 1). The image of horned deer has also depicted. As per the style of the human images, the paintings must be drawn during the time of Mesolithic period. This is the only site is found the earliest paintings in Tamilnadu.

Beside, the images of human and animals are depicted in white ochre. A man is riding the horse with holding sword. This posture is showing as running the fast for hunting the animal. Just away from this horse man, the images of three human are standing in different places. At the centre point there is a deer shown standing in postured. This scene is clearly shown as the human are trying to catch the deer meanwhile an elephant is also depicted. Another one place, human images are standing in a line and they are showing with stretched out hands. Among the human, two human are holding a long poles which means they are trying to catch the deer. The deer has depicted with its calf and the calf is feeding with its mother deer but the deer posture is looking like to escape from the spot. Another one place, five human images are standing in the form of circle with holding their hands which means they are performing dance. Wherever the hunting scene is available there is represented the performance of dance. It is sharing their feelings and enjoying through their dance after hunting the animals. Yet another one place twelve human images have been shown in hunting scene. Among them, one human is holding a long sword which is hanging and crossed over his hip. He might have been as a chief. Availability of material evidences in the Rock paintings is very useful to fix the date .i.e. style of human images and holding the weapon such as stone tools and iron tools. Therefore, on the basis of human style with holding the iron tool, the paintings might have been drawn in Iron Age.

Alambadi (N 12° 01. 962 • E 079° 20 .403 •) is located in Thirukkoyilur Taluk of Viluppuram District about 18km from Thirukkoyilur north-west of Villupuram. The paintings are found in a rock locally known as *Koozhankal paarai* (pebble rock) about 2kms west of Alambadi village. The drawings of deer, tiger, and cow with calf, wild boar, reptiles such as snake and monitor lizards are depicted on

the Rock shelter. The cow with calf and deer behind the trees are significant in the paintings. This site is technically more important because that the people had used thickened red ochre which is more attracted than the other colour meanwhile the X ray motif and the superimposed paintings are noteworthy in this site.

A big sized boulder is standing on the floor and the top portion of the boulder is placed on another one rock. It is almost looking like a shelter. In one place, a Cow (28cm x 12cm) is shown standing in postured with its calf. It has been clearly depicted with the inner organs i.e. intestines (fig no 2). It is technically called as X ray motif, similar to the painting is found at Settavarai in Villuppuram district and Karikkiyur in Nilgiri district. The main aim of the X-ray motif is showing the internal organs of the animals. In another one place, a deer is depicted behind the trees (fig no 3). It is clearly showing that the deer is moving from the trees. Yet another one place, a tiger is depicted with standing in posture and it is trying to attack the deer which is grassing meanwhile another two deer is shown in the act of running which means to escape from the place, it is clearly depicted in the shelter. Apart from these, the masked man has also depicted in the shelter. The paintings were drawn only by a well professional artist. That is why it was naturally depicted on the rock boulder meanwhile the paintings are also superimposed, i.e. depictions of younger paintings over the older ones. The artist has ignored that the earliest paintings and depicted the new paintings over the older motifs. It indicates that the people were occupied in this shelter continuously for some period. On the basis of style and similarities of the paintings, that the images were depicted during the period of Neolithic or beginning early Iron Age.

Settavarai (N 12° 10 02.8• E 079° 15 14.3•) is located in Gingee taluk of Villupuram District, and it is also situated about 40kms from north - west of Villupuram and 20kms south - east of Thiruvannamali. The Rock paintings are found on Ayyanar malai. On reaching the top of the hills, one can find different animals like deer, cattle, wild boar, wolf and fishes which are painted on the rock shelter. Among them, the hand palm impressions and cows with X ray motifs are noteworthy in this site. The images are painted with polychrome which means both red and white ochre used for the paintings but few paintings are depicted only in red ochre.

The deer (height 50 X length 64 cm) has prominently shown with shortened horns (fig no 4). It has depicted by red and white ochre. The red ochre has used only an outline of the image meanwhile the white ochre has applied with entire portion of the animal. The neck part of the image has covered by a thick line and it could be differentiated between the neck and the body portions. The tail has drawn too long. Scholar suggests that the depiction of long tail indicates as cattle but it is not acceptable because it must be the artist mistake. Just behind the animal, another one animal has depicted only single outline. It has drawn in red ochre and it is not clearly visible but it was taking deep study and finally it gives a clue as a deer which is depicted with shortened tail.

In front of the prominent deer, an image is noticed and that could be meat of an animal with a stick inserted into it. Just below, one image has found as flame of the fire. The meat has prepared by roasting. It is a Tandoori system; it was practiced during the period.

At the bottom of the shelter, four left hand (length 12 X height 19 cm) palm impression with five fingers are found and they are depicted with in a border line. Among them, three left hand palms are depicted by red ochre which is only an outline of an image meanwhile the inner side of the palm has applied with white ochre. The fourth hand palm has depicted with thickened red ochre. It must be the artist has tipped his hand in the paint and he has applied over the rock. Just above these paintings, zigzag lines are drawn in white colour.

Just below these images, three cows (length 33 x height 58 cm) are depicted one behind the other; the first image, a front half of a cow is depicted by thickened red ochre and the back portion is shown with number of line marks for an indicating as bones. It is X ray motif; similar to the painting is found Alambadi in Villuppuram district and Karikkiyur in Nilgiri district. The second one is not clear, it is almost faded in condition but the third cow is resemblance to the first one.

The two fishes are found in the shelter. Both fishes are depicted in red and white colours i.e. the red ochre has used only an outline of an image while the white is applied an entire body portion. The

first fish (length 68 cm X breadth 24 cm) is depicted with six dots on its body portion while another one fish (length 50 X breadth 18 cm) is found with opened mouth and also six dots are noticed on its body portions. But this fish is entirely different than the first fish. Symbol of fish may be indicating growth of clan. Cow is also found nearby this fish with thickened red ochre. It shows its inner organism. On the basis of the paintings style, it must be dated in between the late Neolithic and beginning of Iron Age.

Alagarmalai N 10° 04. 458' E 077° 50. 719' is located in Melur Taluk of Madurai District which is situated about 19km from the Melur. The site is situated very near to the Alagarkoil and it is also found on northern side of village called Sundarajanpatti which is located about 2kms from the site. The rock shelter has painted with thickened red ochre. The total area of the paintings measures about 13mt in length and 5mt in height. The preparation has made for the drawings with border lines which are drawn by red and white ochre i.e. one over the other. The paintings are depicted on the wall and ceiling portions with thickened red. The Jain beds, bas-relief sculpture and brahmi inscription are also noticed in the same shelter.

On ceiling portion: On western side, two animals depict in standing posture. One is deer which is shown with horns and straightened tail. The animal depicts towards eastern direction while the second animal is a dog. It is standing in posture with opened mouth. The tail hangs down. The dog is depicted towards western direction. An opposite of this animal, four line marks are depicted, it could be used for number of animals i.e. an indicating as exists of four animals in the paintings. Just above this animal, a plus mark has depicted. Just down, two human images have depicted with elephant. Among them, one human is sitting on the horse. His right hand holds a stick meanwhile his left hand holds an animal. An adjacent to this image, the second human depicts standing in posture. His right hand holds bridle while left hand holds a weapon like *Gadhayutha*. Just above, another two human images has shown with decorated motifs. The first human has found standing in posture but his head has destroyed. He wears lower and upper garments with line designs. His right hand also holds a weapon like *Gadhayutha* and his left hand hangs down. He holds a sharpened sword in his left hip. In his left hand side, the second human is riding the horse. He has also shown with weapon.

On the eastern side of these images, a walking human has depicted with beak of bird. He wears both lower and upper garments with designs. Just down to this image, a ladder with six steps and tool like a rode are also depicted. At the bottom of these images, a standing human has shown with beak of bird. In this site, beaked human images have depicted which are similar to the images found at Kizhvalai in Villupuram District, Thirumaiyam in Pudukottai District and Thirumalai in Sivaganga District. His hairs are spread over his head. He wears lower and upper garments. Apart from these, images of standing deer with horns, a human with fish, three circles and an image of a standing human is holding his hands on his hip are also depicted in this shelter.

Wall portion: A standing human image has shown with broader shoulder. He is different than the other human images because the entire image has applied with thickened red ochre. There is no any outline. But, most of the images have depicted only an outline for the images.

Next to this, a human has shown standing in posture. His hairs are spread over the head. A straight line depicts at the centre of the human body. It is indicating as back bone of the human. He may be a horse man which is standing just away from him. Nearby these images, three human images have depicted standing in posture. The first human has shown with a straight line which is indicating as back bone to the human. The second human image has shown with broader shoulder. He has shown with ribs with back bone (fig no 5). He is bigger than the other two human images. The third human has depicted with inner organs. For the first time, the human image with X ray motif has reported in Tamilnadu.

Adjacent to these images, a human is sitting on horse. He has shown in the act of riding the horse. He has shown with broader shoulder. His right hand holds a sword while left hand holds horse. In the shelter two different cells are found. Among them, one cell contains the images of horse, standing human and tiger with upturned tail are also depicted. On the basis of style of the image and presence of iron sword holding by human means the paintings must be drawn in Iron Age.

Mallachandram N 12° 38 230 • E 078° 05 944 • is located in Krishnagiri Taluk and District. The important and impressive Megalithic site at Mallachandram is situated about 30km from Krishnagiri.

An accessible to the Mallachandram is via Sampalpallam which is lying on the Krishnagiri and Bangalore highway.

The dolmen locally called as *Panduvurarkoil* are found on the low hillock namely *Moralparai*. More than 200 dolmens could be identified on the flat surface of the hill. The height of the dolmen varied from 1m to 2.50m. The paintings are found on the interior and exterior portions of the dolmens. The white ochre has used for all the paintings. These paintings can be seen through the port hole.

PAINTINGS ON THE DOLMEN (Fig no 6) Dolmen 1: The paintings are depicted on the interior portion of the southern orthostatic. The three stick human images are depicted in standing postured with upraised hands. Beside these images, another one image has found which is almost to be considered as the depiction of the cist burial. The burial structure has also at Varamalakunda in Krishnagiri district but the type is different which is Sarcophagus.

Dolmen 2: The images are depicted on the western orthostatic. The four human images are depicted with riding the animals. Among them, the first human has shown on horse. His right hand is holding the robe for controlling the animal while left hand stretched out. He is holding a weapon on his hip. The horse has depicted with opened mouth, fur raises hairs and the tail is hanging down. The second and the third horse riders are also same features but not clear and the fourth human has shown on Big Cat (fig no 7). His left hand is holding a stick for controlling the animal while right hand is stretching out. A cover hangs on his hip for keeping the weapon. This image has found very lean. An animal has shown with opened mouth and upraised tail which is decorated by hairs. The nails are depicted on its legs. He must be died at the time of fighting with an animal.

Apart from these, the two sun symbols are depicted with 16 rays. Three ceremonial symbols are depicted. Apart from these, a mythical human figurine has shown in standing posture. His face is similar to the bird's beak and his upraised tail has also shown over its head.

Dolmen 3: The images are depicted on western orthostatic. All images are faded and destroyed in condition but one human image has shown on the horse. He is depicted with stretched out hands.

Dolmen 4: The image is depicted on the eastern orthostatic i.e. just above the port hole. The human shown in standing postured. He is shown with stretched hands.

The depiction of burial structure, the human images with riding the animal and ceremonial symbols have depicted only on particular dolmens not for all. The human has shown on big cat which means he must be as a hunter and killed by the animal meanwhile the human images have shown with riding the horses they may be as warriors died during the time of wars. After conducting the ceremonial, they might have been depicted on the dolmen as images. The images have depicted on the dolmen in same period but it was not later than that i.e. Iron Age.

Kamayakaundanpatti N 09 ° 43.988• E 077 ° 20.534• is located in Cumbum Taluk of Theni District. The site is located 3.5km from the village. The site is locally known as *Sankaligaradu* in which five rock shelters are found. Among them, one shelter contains drawings. The shelter facing is towards northern direction. The area of paintings is about 10mtr in length. The temple named as Sankaligaruppan is also located at the bottom of the mount which is worshiping by the local people.

The drawings are depicted in thickened white ochre. In one place two human sitting on the buffalo and riding the animal. They are facing resemblance to the peak of bird. Among them, the first human is holding a long pole for controlling the animal while the second human is sitting behind the first human. The buffalo depicts with prominent horns and muscular body. It has drawn by thickened white ochre.

In one place, four human figurines are depicted in one behind the other and they are carrying a long pole on their heads. They are passing over the bridge which means number of timbers are arranged and tied one by one and finally they made as a bridge to pass from the one side to other. It is indicating there may be a canal. That's why the artist has depicted the entire scene in the paintings. An archaeological remains of Black and red ware, black ware and red ware are found on western side of this shelter. On the basis of material evidences the paintings must be drawn between 1000 and 500BCE.

CONCLUSION

The paintings are found in different parts of Tamilnadu. Each and every painting is giving new idea and theme. The paintings at Vellarikombay in Nilgiri District, Alambadi, Settavarai in Viluppuram District, Alagarmalai in Madurai District, Mallachandram in Krishnagiri District and Kamayakaundanpatti are vital role in the history of rock paintings in Tamilnadu. Among the sites, Vellerikombay is the earliest paintings as per the style. The paintings at Alambadi and Settavarai are technically most important sites. Because, these sites are giving X ray motif which means showing the inner organs of the animals but the paintings at Alagarmalai is entirely different .i.e. the human X ray motif is found only in the site particularly in Tamilnadu. Apart from these, the image of burial structure is depicted on the megalithic dolmen which is found at Mallachandram. Another interesting site is the Kamayakaundanpatti where the bridge is noted in the paintings. It is indicating there may be an existing of a canal in this site. An accurate date is difficult to fix the rock paintings but it can be possible only by the relativity dating which means to compare with style and similarities of the paintings meanwhile archaeological materials such as pottery shreds and Iron slag. They are determined the date to the rock paintings in Tamilnadu.

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Figurine No -1



Figurine No -2



Figurine No -3



Figurine No -4



Figurine No -5



Figurine No -6



Figurine No -7



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