

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF ROCK ART AND ETHNOGRAPHIC PARALLELS IN INDIA

CHAKRAVERTY Somnath, Calcutta, India

Summary

The focal area for archaeological studies are initially concerned with collection of early material evidences of mankind. Its systematic classification and analysis leads to ultimate reconstruction of early society and culture. Rock art sites in India have produced considerable evidences of early material culture through visual representation of art-motifs. The other sources of data on early material culture is artefacts found in different layers of the deposit underlying the floor of the painted rock shelters and caves. So far, selected few rock art sites in India have been systematically excavated. It is revealed from the present study that the overall general pattern of successive cultural levels as evident from the artefacts are somewhat different from the context of rock art. In majority of the rock art sites, blade-bladelet elements are predominant, in cases associated with fragments of pottery.

The early material culture, its involved technology, significance and functional attributes - all are more dependable sources for identifying the cultural level of the society that created art.

In the present study, attempt has been made to compare the archaeological data on artefacts with the visual narratives of the rock art available in the same site.

For interpretation of the material evidences available in the rock art, ethnographic data on local tribal societies have been compared and analysed. Two principal observations that have emerged from the analysis are that - in Indian context, the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic stages of culture are sometimes overlapping and have continued till later date. Therefore, the tool typology available in the rock art site cannot be considered as a dependable chronological determinant. The material culture and its technological level as represented in the rock art suggest the presence of an art-practising society which were almost at the same level of contemporary primitive tribal communities present in the same eco-cultural niche.