



Research Paper

Petroglyphs of North Guwahati

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Abstract: In this paper the historical background of North Guwahati is focused by exploring the the rock art present their having special focus on the petroglyphs available in various historical sites. Analysing the petroglyphs present there glimps of the historical era that has passed through these places can easily reconstructable.

Keywords: Petroglyphs, Mason Marks, KnaiBoroxiBowa, Dirgheswari,Rajadovar.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Rock artis human-made marking place on natural stone, painting, and craving above the rockis rock art. These art forms are always found on immovable rock surface such as cave walls, large boulders etc. It represent the earliest form of creativity of human mind, it is largely synonymous with parietal art as the prehistoric people or our ancestor used the rock cave for their dwellings and the rock paintings are done, mostly on this cave walls and the cillings. These rock art symbolizes the beginning of all the forms of art present in the world today, it gives us huge information about the social and cultural conditions of primitive societies as well as their creativity. There are many examples of rock art found in different places of India and all across the world of ancient civilizations showing human figures in various forms like dancing in groups, hunting, fishing, there are depiction of fishes, birds and various animals like deer, elephant, boar, cow, etc. and there are also many structural art forms found on the rock surface. More simply rock art can be defined as a creative work done by humans on the rock surface, like pictographs—including paintings, drawings, stencils, prints, beeswax, motifs etc., the paintings were made of colours like Red and Brown from bole or hematite; yellows, orange from ochre; white from zinc oxide; Blue from iron and silicic acid; blacks from charcoal or soot, among those the predominantly used colours were Red, Black and White. These colours were mixed with spit or animal fat and brushes made from horsehair were used for paint application and outlining. Petroglyphs—engravings, incising, pecking, gouging, symbolic grinding, etchings etc.

The primitive man might have wanted to decorate their dwelling areas which were usually caves or any form of rock shelters and they started making different types of art forms over the rock surface and they chose everything from their surrounding initially like animals, human figures and some other natural objects. Slowly these art forms also evolved along with the human civilizations like they started to make heroic scenes, religious figures, social recognitions etc. They could have used the habit of painting of animals on the walls of caves to document their hunting achievements because we always find large numbers of animal pictures painted in rock art sites. These types of Stone Age art is divided into three main categories-

1. Pictographs- Pictographs are paintings or drawings that have been placed only the rock face.
2. Petroglyphs- Petroglyphs are engravings or cravings into the rock panel.
3. Earth figures- Earth figures are large designs and motifs that are created on the stone ground surface.

The word “petroglyph” has taken from the Greek word “Petra” meaning ‘stone’ and “glypho” meaning ‘to crave’ Petroglyphs are one of the most interesting forms of Rock Art. They are the art forms or images created by removing parts of a rock surface by incising, pecking, craving directly by using stone or any hard materials in the stone surface. It can be of any types or form of making on a stone. These petroglyphs are containing valuable integral meaning. Petroglyphs are found worldwide; many are dated approximately to late upper Paleolithic and Neolithic period. Even after pictographs and ideograms began to develop in later culture. Petroglyphs were still common in some culture and continued using them till the late historical period. Highest concentrations of petroglyphs are found in parts of Africa, Scandinavia, Siberia, Southwestern, North America, and Australia

Rock art in north east India

The north eastern states of India are rich in history, culture and heritage. These states has a member of rock art sites in the north-eastern belt of Garo hills of Assam, Bengal, Manipur, Tripura etc. and there may be much more to be explored. Among all of these North-Guwahati Kamrup Assam is also very much rich both in historically and culturally. It has many historical sites which reflect the great kamarupra history, along with that north Guwahati is also home to a number of Rock Art sites. There are many rockengravings, sculptures, pillars, motifs etc. present at the historical sites.

STUDY AREA

North Guwahati is located at 18°N 91.720E with an area of 550 sq. km. north Guwahati hill ranges and its adjoining areas covering North Guwahati is north part of the city of Guwahati in Kamrup rural district in the Indian state of Assam. This area has many historical places. Amingaon is district head quarter of Kamrup rural district. It is located at 26th tributaries like Nonoi river, Bornodi, Madankuri, Puspabhadra, etc. which flows from the northern and eastern boundary through the area to southern boundary of the mighty river Brahmaputra.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF NORTH GUWAHATI

North Guwahati is an ancient town, in the Puranas. It was known as the “East Kashi”. The ancient name of NE is Durjaya. The hermitage of Markandeya was located on the foothill of the Dirgheswari hill or the Sita Parbat on the bank of the Puspabhadra. It was North Guwahati rather than Guwahati that attracted the local kings to build their capital and administrative center because it had both economic and strategic advantages; the Natuanacha Part was once the Centre of dance and songs of the whole Northeastern part of the present India. It was the capital of ancient state of Kamrupa under Pala dynasty. The Pala kings ruled the country from this town which was known as “Durjyoy Nagar”. In early medieval time this area was known as Kamrupa Nagara. This place continued to be the capital from the time of Dharma Pala till 1260 A.D, after that the government was transferred to further west. During the Ahom rule, North Guwahati was an important Centre to mobilize the military forces against the Mughal invaders. North Guwahati process many historical temples. Fortifications and moats of ancient origin. There are two temples on the aswakrantra hills. It is one of finest specimens of sculptural skill in kamarupa about the beginning of 12th century.

The western part of the town is called sil-sako because it still contains a small stone-built bridge over a stream. The eastern part is known as Raja-duar (king gate), which signifies that the king place was there. The second copper plate of Dharma Pala was found in the village of Rangmahal about two miles to the North of Raja-Dour. This is another indication that the capital was then at North-Guwahati.

ROCK ART PRESENT IN KAMRUPA IN FORM OF PETROGLYPHS

1. KANAI BARASI BOWA

The Kanai Barasi rock inscription site is located on the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra lying by the side of a motor able road. This site lies on a hillock on the bank of the river Brahmaputra with scattered pieces of boulders and a large block of rock surrounded by other smaller blocks. This area appears to be of significance strategic importance as it exist four important rock inscriptions and many numbers of petroglyphs. All relating to military victories of regional power over foreign invaders that attacks Assam from west. The rock inscription No1 belongs to 1206 CE & rock inscription NO 2 & 3 belongs to 1665 CE.

The Rock Inscription 1 records the destruction of the Truks who invaded kamrup in 1206 A.D. Muhammad –Ibn-Bakhtiyar an Turko-Afghan leader after conquering Bihar and Bengal invaded Assam with an Army of 12,000 Horsemen in 1206. Prithu was the king of kamrup at that time. During the invasion the stone bridge on Barnadi was destroyed, all the boats were removed, king Prithu struck when the Turko-Afghan army was trying to cross the river. Most of the invading solders and horses were drowned in the river and Bhaktiyarkhilji escaped but he was killed soon.

Rock Inscription 2-This inscription records that the Ministers BurahGohain, Borphukan, Bharat GohainPhukan and DihingiyaSandikaiPhukan of SwarganarayanDeo (Chakra DhvajSingha) were in charge of erecting the Rampart in 1665 A.D after the territory receives a defeat and murder Sayed Sana and Syed Firoz.

Rock Inscription 3- This inscription records that the Ministers BurahGohain, Borphukan, BrahatGohainPhukan and DihingiyaSandikaiPhukan and DihingiyaSandikaiPhukan of SwarganarayanDeo (Chakra DhvajSingha) caused the erection of a Rampart here in 1667 A.D. this inscription also explains about the erection of a Rampart like the second inscription.

There is also a temple constructed over a rock, a rock cut engraving of Ganesha is present there which is very beautifully sculpted. Here also presents huge number of petroglyphs, the petroglyphs includes various Mason’s mark, human figures, engraving of chaseboard pattern, mythical animal, other geometrical designs etc. some of them are as follows:

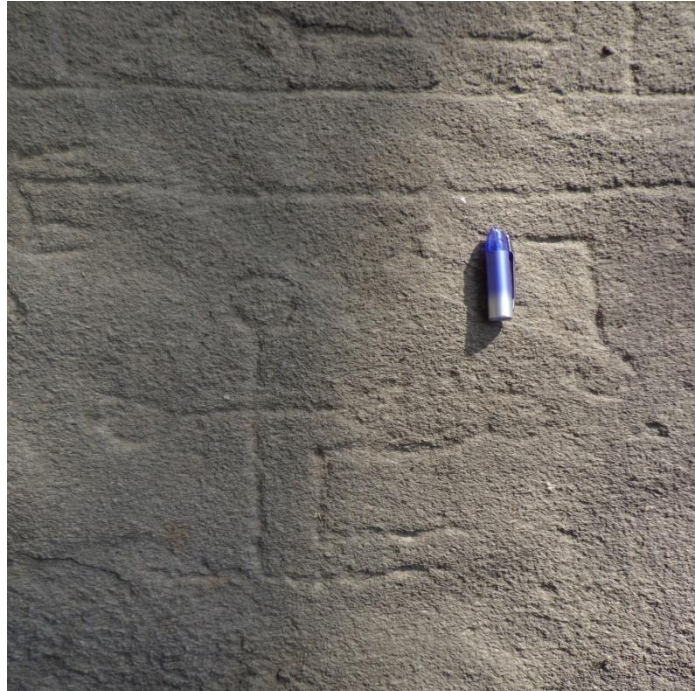


Fig: 1 – Mason mark



Fig: 2- Human figures



Fig: 3 Mythical animal

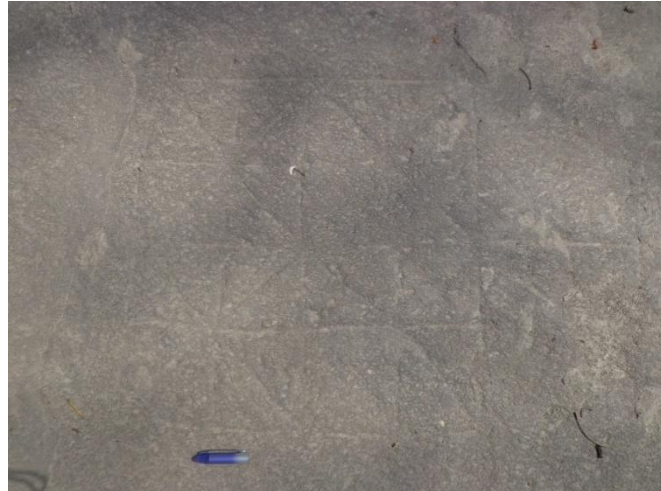


Fig : 4 – Chessboard pattern



Fig: 5 – Mason mark



Fig : 6-Human figure, female.

II. DIGHESWARI TEMPLE

DIGHESWARI temple is located in the northern bank of river Brahmaputra. It is one of the supreme Devi tritha dedicated to goddess durga, it is an important goddess temple of the entire state of Assam. The present temple complex of digheswari was built by Ahom king Swargadeo Siva sinha during his reign (1714CE-1744CE), under the supervision of TarunduhwarahBarphukan the Ahom Viceroy of Guwahati And lower Assam. The land was granted by the Ahom king Swargadeo Siva Singha in the name of the temple.

Presently the temple is a recognized site by Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) as an historically important site and its structure and complex is preserved by it. Many ancient images made on rock existed along with the temple, numbers of rock art Ganesh images and Shiva linga were found in the temple site, an inscription is also found at the main gate of the temple which verifies its construction during the period of SwargadeoSivasingha. In addition to these number of petroglyphs are also found at the temple premise. Some of the images are as follows-



Fig : 7 – Shiva image.

The figure is well decorated with ornaments and designs and it is observed as a face of Lord Shiva. The figure is located at a height of the rock.



Fig :8 - Engraving of temple structure.



Fig :9 - Lotus shaped engraving.



Fig: 10 - A pair of tusked elephant.



Fig :11 - Row of temples being engraved on rock surface.

III. RAJADOWAR AREA

The RajadwarChowk is situated at North Guwahati, Kamrup. It covers the area of Chandra Bharati Hills. It was the capital city of Durjaya established by powerful Pala kings until 1206 A.D. It has many physical suitability being located on a crescent shaped plain fortified by Barnadi on the east, Dirgheswari ,Mandakata and Natuanaca hills on the north and the mighty Brahmaputra on the south. This place historically very rich in nature, it has many petroglyphs from the historical period like warrior images, sword and many other interesting figures, some of them are as follows-



Fig :12 - Sword engraving



Fig :13 - Mason mark



Fig :14 -Boat engraving



Fig: 15- Figure of a warrior.



Fig :16 -khorai shaped engraving

IV. Conclusion

Rock art is a common term for several types of creations including finger markings left on soft surface, engraved figures and symbols, paintings etc. onto a rock surface. Rock art has been recorded in almost every part on the globe including Africa, America, Asia, Australia and Europe. It gives a huge information regarding the past social, environmental conditions as the early man used to represent their everyday ongoing activities in their art forms like there are many pictographs found of fauna and flora, social activities etc. It is found many culturally diverse regions of the world, there forms and themes changes regionally. It denotes every prehistoric man-made marking on natural stone like rock carving, rock engraving, rock inscription, rock drawing, rock painting and all these are mainly divided as Petroglyphs and Pictographs.

In this project our main focus is put on the Petroglyphs found on the hills of the North-Guwahati, kamrup district Assam and its surrounding areas. Through the study on this project we can definitely consider North Guwahati as a very rich historical area, it has got many important sites which exists magnificent sculptures of Hindu deities, many inscriptions are found here which the main sources in reconstructing the past are and along with that there also presents a lots of petroglyphs in the historical sites.. Varieties of petroglyphs are found which represents the social, cultural, traditional aspects of the past in many ways and also shows the interests of the people on art activities. It might be a very developed center of arts and its evidences are scattered all over the area, it shows the skills and knowledge on art and architecture.

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