

## **Neolithic Cartography and Trade Routes in South Western Coastal Maharashtra, India**

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### **Abstract**

Following research paper deals with discovery of new evidences in Western Maharashtra by the author Anita Rane-Kothare of Maps engraved on hillocks, indicating trade routes towards the Deccan plateau from the Neolithic period. Petroglyphs or rock carvings have always been considered as one of the richest cultural resources of mankind, for understanding the history of mankind. Most of the petroglyphs are naturalistic and realistic and also have got a geometrical affluence. Though petroglyphs have been found in all five continents, in India they have been observed in the North Domkhar region in Ladakh, Kashmir to the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala in the south. However records and studies of petroglyphs in the various states of India, of conspicuously have an absence of the state of Maharashtra. However the researcher while exploring the Konkan or the western region of Maharashtra came across some unknown mystical petroglyphs at four sites in the district of Ratnagiri. Initially the researcher thought that these petroglyphs were geometrical designs but soon the researcher realised that their location and presentation represented something different and were unique. Being a student of ancient Indian history, culture and archaeology had she discovered India's or rather world's earliest forms of cartography or mapping on the surfaces on the surface of hillocks and on a road adjoining the NH17highway from Mumbai to Goa. This paper will also show the geographical location of Aparanta or Konkan and the development of Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jain caves on the trade routes from Deccan to Konkan. Sculptures like the Ashtabhaya depicting the eight fears while traveling at Kanheri and Ajanta are evidences of fears while traveling. A new group of Brahmanical caves was also discovered at Lanja in Ratnagiri Taluka by the researcher showing a trade route which was used continuously from the prehistoric period to medieval period.

**Key Words:** *Petroglyphs, Cartography, archaeological evidences. Neolithic, Caves, inscriptions, geographical location, Western Maharashtra, trade routes*

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