

Elephas maximus in Rock Art of Kerala, India

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ABSTRACT

India is famous for its diversity in culture, animals, geography, climate and Kerala is not an exception to this. Each region has separate features in all aspects. Kerala is situated in the Deep South of the Indian peninsular. The study of rock art provides rich and realistic insight into the cultural history of man as well as their cognitive abilities. The activities of early man on rocks by engraving or painting are expressed as their thoughts and beliefs. *Elephas maximus* is commonly known as Asian elephant. In rock art, along with many other animal species elephants are also commonly depicted. In rock art in Kerala, elephants are normally depicted as single, tamed elephants used by humans for riding and in groups as well. In Kerala, elephants are depicted in Edakkal and Marayoor group shelters. This paper aims to understand the creative manifestations of an illiterate society which are used as visual art or as visual communication. Prehistoric art is probably part of their subsistence of hunting and gathering, magico-religious activities. Prehistoric men operated within a framework of mechanisms like symbols and abstractions which changed to species identification in later periods. Evolution of hominids and development in cognitive abilities will also change the way of life. These processes may be utilized for a better understanding of the depictions. During the study the author uses ethnographic analogy for better understanding and study of the elephant motif in the rock art of the area.

Keywords: - *Elephas maximus, Rock Art of Kerala, Ethnographic Analogy, Visual Art, Visual Communication*

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