

Analytical Study of Newly Discovered Rock Art Site at Panni Waterfall in Panna District, Central India, M.P.

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Abstract: This study is based on the observation of the rock art paintings recovered from the recently investigated prehistoric rock art site at Panni waterfall in the Panna district of Madhya Pradesh. Panna area is well known for its cultural heritage, diamond mining, national tiger reserve, waterfalls, and beauty of natural resources. After extensive exploration, it is found that there are several natural waterfalls in the study area, which enhances its aesthetic appeal. It is also evident that the majority of rock art sites discovered in the Panna area are situated around waterfalls. Present rock shelters are also situated near a waterfall known as Panni waterfall. It is a well-known tourist site during the rainy season. During the exploration four rock shelters are identified around the waterfall and they are having artwork or paintings on the wall of rock. Thematically, these paintings featured human figurines and abstract patterns, and it is noticed that only two or three of the human figures are zoomorphic.

Keywords: Analytical, Panni waterfall, Rock Shelter, Zoomorphic, Paintings

Introduction

It is well known that the rock art of the Indian subcontinent is renowned for its density, originality, and profound meaning. When people lived in caves, they used to paint the rock with colours derived from natural resources. Humans made cave paintings throughout the prehistoric era to preserve the memories of their surrounding environment and to reflect their cultures, cultural activities, inventiveness, beliefs,

rituals, and everyday lives (Shekhar and Kim, 2014). Central India is renowned for Prehistory and rock art research (Bajpai, 1996; Mathpal, 1984; Sankaliya, 1974; Allchin, 1963; Agarwal, 2000; Chauhan, 2009; Singh, 2018; Dehuri, 2018; Joshi, 1961), it's also known for well-preserved rock painting and their uniqueness (Mathpal, 1976-77; 1984). Mathpal (1984) reported that A.C.L. Carlyle uncovered the first evidence of rock art on the Indian subcontinent in 1867 at Sohagighat near Mirzapur in Central India. Later on, several researchers worked continuously in this area to uncover more rock shelters and art locations including Jadia (196-62), Ghosh (1961-62), Gupta (1984), Govil (2010), Dehuri and Roy (2015), Kumar (2017), Patel and Farswan, (2022), Patel et. al, (2020), et.

Panna is located in Central India, and it is the centre of several painted rock shelters. In this area rock paintings locally known as Khoon Ki Putariya (Blood Paintings), Chudelan Ke Chitra (Vampire Paintings), Lekhani (writing), Putariyan (paintings), while rock shelters known as Seha, Gufa, Kandra, Tor.

The Vindhyan range, which has an average height of 350 meters and serves as a boundary between northern and peninsular India, occupies the Panna district. The oldest rock in this area is the Bundelkhand granite, which is composed of two distinct kinds of deposits, namely the Kuddapa rock group and the Vindhyan rock group (Sinha, 1994). Studies on rock paintings globally also revealed that India is one of the six primary locations of rock art concentration, however, the remaining regions are South-Western Europe, Russia, North Africa, and Australia (Mathpal, 1991). Nearly three-quarters of all rock art locations are documented from a sandstone hilltop in Central India's Vindhyan range (Shekhar & Kim, 2014), but still, there are so many areas that are not explored extensively. Keeping because of the importance of rock paintings, this paper is aimed to report first time the significance of Panni waterfall rock shelters.

Study Area

We have considered the Panna district for the study which is located in the north-eastern portion of Madhya Pradesh and stretches from 79.45° East to 80.40° East longitude and 23.45° North to 25.10° North latitude, with an average elevation of 350 metres. The major portion of the district's land is covered by National parks and protected forests. Geomorphologically this region is a notable portion of the Vindhyan plateau and Ken River as well as its tributaries Sonar, Bearma, Baghin, and Patne are the most significant bodies of water in this region. The present study area the rock shelters of Panni waterfall is a part of Gunor Tahsil of M.P.

Fieldwork and Morphological analysis of paintings

Extensive fieldwork was conducted in Panna district of M.P. by the first author during the session 2021 and uncovered more rock art locations, including the Panni waterfall. This is located around 25 kilometres east of Saleha, Panna district of M.P. close to Bijadoh and Sonai hamlet. Though there are several natural rock shelters, only four of them have rock art. Each shelter has just two or three identifiable paintings since the majority have been defaced by natural forces/weathering or the shelter's inhabitants. The morphological analysis of paintings recovered from four shelters is described below sequentially.

The first shelter is located to the left of the waterfall and faces northeast (Figures-2 and 3). In this rock shelter, there are only one/two paintings are seen in dull condition and obscured and unidentifiable, since they have been entirely weathered or damaged by the bad environmental conditions. The paintings

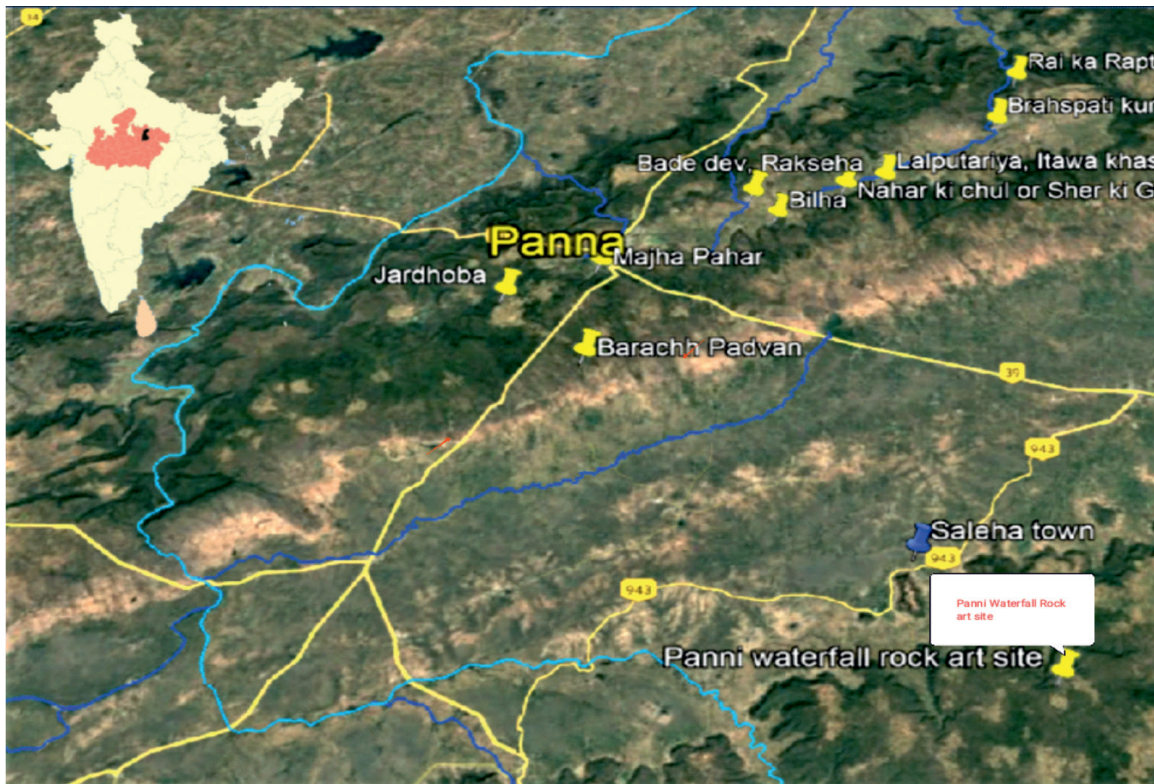


Figure 1: Map Showing the Rock Art site Panni Waterfall



Figure 2: Location of Shelters Shelter –1

on the shelter have been enhanced with the application of Dstreach software and observed that just a single panel is painted. In which, six geometrically outlined human figures are identified. Some of these human figurines have a weapon like device in their hands and are marching in a row (Figure-4A & Figure-4B).



Figure 3: General view of Shelter Number-1



Figure 4(A): Depicted Paintings of Shelter No. 1

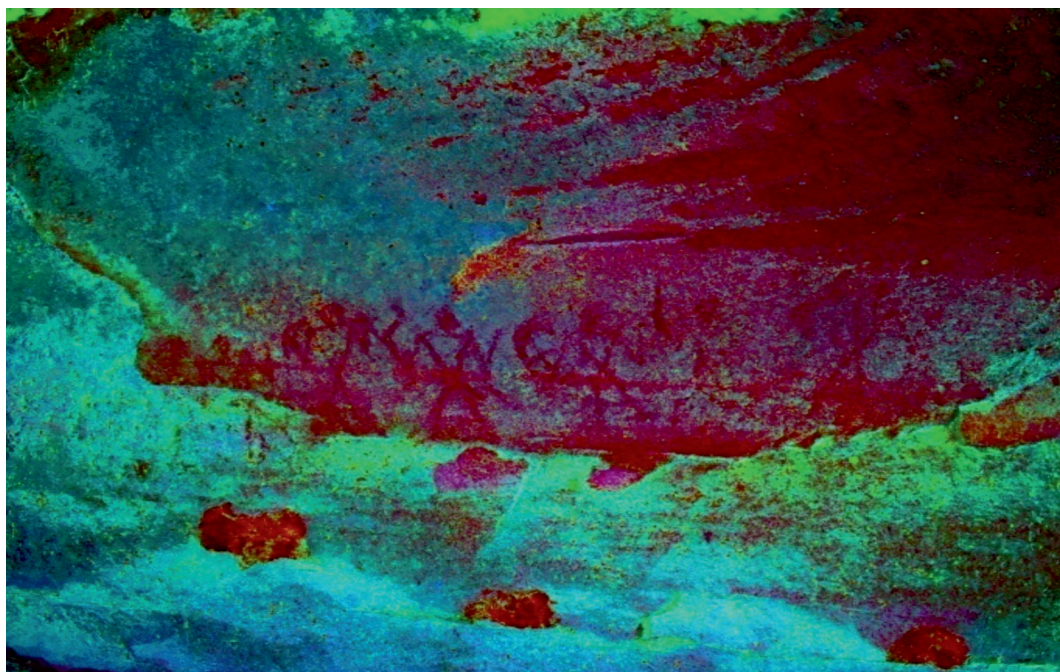


Figure 4(B): Enhanced image of Paintings

Shelter-2

The second shelter is located on the right side of the waterfall and faces southwest (Figure-2 & Figure-5). This shelter was also vandalized by weathering and human causes. Therefore, rock paintings of this shelter have been identified by using DStretch software and it was observed that the paintings are depicted on the shelter's roof and walls. The themes and styles of the murals in this rock shelter are bizarre and peculiar, such types of paintings have not been documented in other parts of this region. In one scene two dancing human figurines are depicted on the ceiling of this shelter (Figure-6A), while in another scene abstract motifs are depicted (Figure-6B).



Figure 5: View of Shelter-2

A second picture is painted on the wall of the shelter featuring 6 to 7 human figurines along with one animal figurine rendered in a geometrical outline, which is identified as a horse. However, one figure is unidentified in this image (Figure-7A). In addition to this, two other paintings on the wall of this shelter are recovered, these works of art are so odd and mysterious. One of the paintings depicts what seems to be an octopus or other mythological monster, while the other has unidentifiable ornamentation or other objects (Figure-7B).



Figure 6(A): Human Figurines of Shelter-2

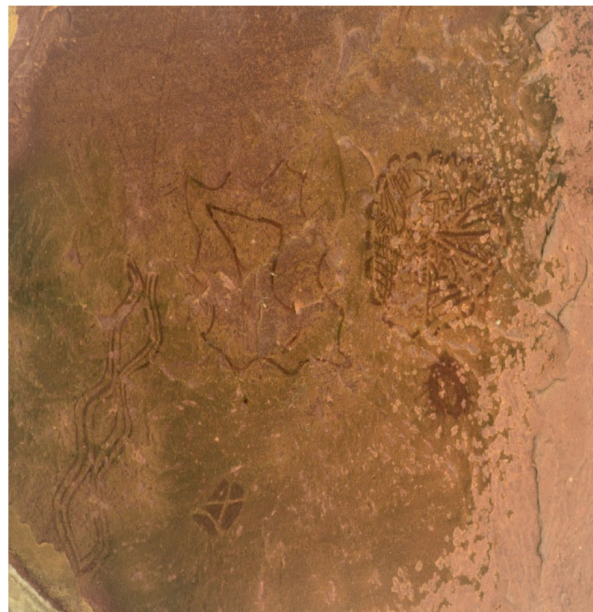


Figure 6(B): Paintings of Designs of Shelter-2



Figure 7(A): Painted Panel



Figure 7(B): Dstrech Enhanced Panel Shelter-3 and 4

As can be seen in Figure-2, the third and fourth shelters are positioned on the right side of the Panni waterfall, facing southwest, and are located above the second shelter (Figure-2 & Figure-8). In this shelter, none of the paintings is in preserved condition, just their remnants are visible, which have been deteriorated entirely and are unidentifiable. To identify these paintings Dstrech software was

used and after the application of Dstreach, one scene is visible in shelter number three, consisting of five-five pairs of vertical lines (Figure-9B), also one scene is seen in the fourth shelter, which has two strange scenarios, one of which consists of four human figurines and in this artwork, humans wearing tall crowns on their heads, and their legs are comparatively small. Besides this one human figure is there but its position is not identified properly(Figure-10A & 10B).

It is interesting to note that no signs of habitation and evidence of microliths and other associated materials are recovered in or around all four shelters. Though the colour used in paintings of all shelters are light red and dark red but no sign/evidence of colour preparation is recovered from any shelter.



Figure 8: General view of Shelter-3 and 4



Figure 9(A): Weathering and Eroding of Rock

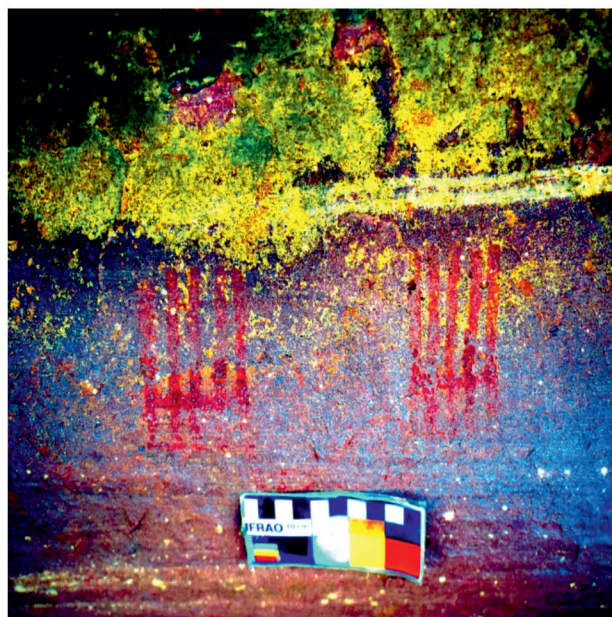


Figure 9(B): Depicted scene of shelter number-3

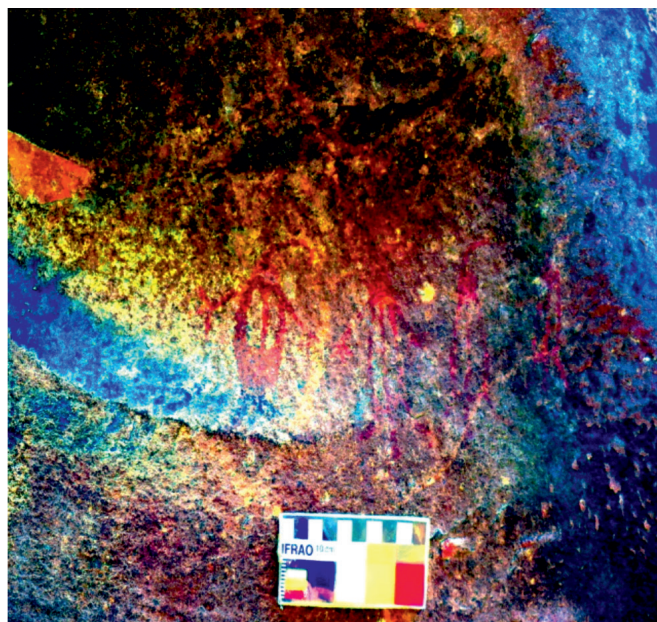


Figure 10(A): Human Figurines of Shelter-4

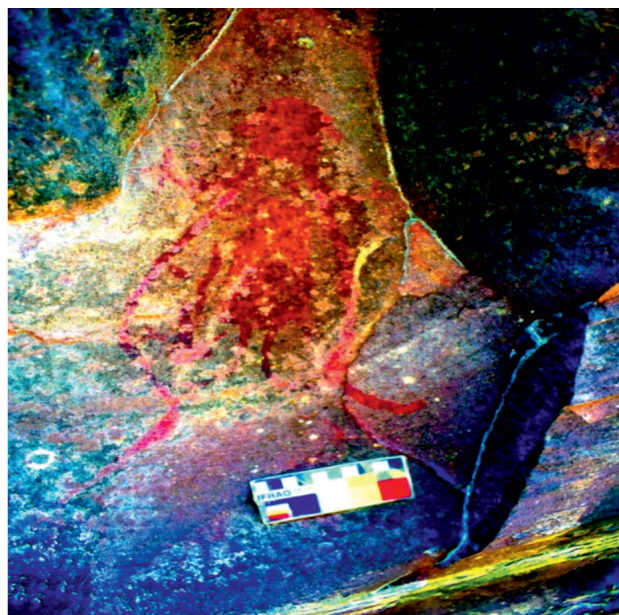


Figure 10(B): Unrecognized Painting of shelter 4

Conclusion

The given research on the rock art of the Panna area demonstrates that the art may be comprehended in its particular geographical, geological, ecological, and temporal context. Rock arts of the Panna region is a prime example of significant rock art locations. From the study of literary data it is evident that *Pictographs* and *Petroglyphs* are the two major types of rock art. Although no *petroglyphs* have been reported in this region. The location of the water source is a strategic location for hunting in prehistoric times and a majority of the rock art sites in the Panna area are situated around the water sources, especially near the waterfalls (Mathpal, 1984; Agarwal, 2000; Banerjee, Varma, & Pike, 2015).

The Panni fall study area is a seasonal waterfall amid a deep forest. Due to the availability of a wide range of edible plants and animals, water and forest were the most desirable settings for prehistoric settlements. The specific features of the Panni waterfall rock art are that the paintings were created on the ceilings and walls of the rock shelter. These paintings were executed in geometric styles with outlined and silhouetted forms. According to Mathpal (1984), the geometric pattern of paintings dates back to the beginning of history.

Thematically, the paintings of Panni waterfall include dancing human figures, animal figurines, abstract patterns, some ornamented designs, and cryptic images as well, however, it is noticed that only two or three of the human figurines are zoomorphic. Paintings made in these shelters were made by using a single colour which is light or dark red. A deep and thorough examination of these rock paintings revealed that they were made with the use of thin strokes. The paintings are recovered in a very poor condition of preservation, and it is due to the weathering, natural elements, insects and man-made causes respectively. Here it is also to add that among the four rock shelters the majority of paintings are recovered from the group shelter-2.

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