



Directorate of Tourism, U.P.

Parayatan Bhawan
C-13 Vipin Khand | Gomti Nagar | Lucknow - 226 010
Tel : 91.522.2308916
Email : upstdc@up-tourism.com
website : www.up-tourism.com



PAINTED ROCK SHELTERS of

THE NORTH VINDHYAS





Text : Dr. Rakesh Tewari
Directorate of U.P. State Archaeology

Editing : Mr. Haridas Rao

Photographs : Dr. Rakesh Tewari
Directorate of U.P. State Archaeology

Design : Mr. Rohan Rao
Mr. Siddhartha Anant - Armaan, Lucknow
Ms. Sameera Shahani - Armaan, Lucknow

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PAINTED ROCK SHELTERS *of*

THE NORTH VINDHYAS

Uttar Pradesh
Amazing Heritage | Grand Experiences





Rock art is the earliest attempt by human beings to depict their natural world symbolically. This art is found all over the world; they have not only attracted scholars but also tourists in large numbers.

India's first painted rock shelters were discovered in Uttar Pradesh in the Sohagi Hills, Mirzapur near Varanasi in 1867-68 by A.C.L. Carllyele . These were the first rock paintings found anywhere else in the world. Since then hundreds of painted rock shelters has been marked in the Districts of Chandauli, Sonbhadra, Mirzapur, Allahabad, Mau, Banda and Agra; in fact everywhere in Uttar Pradesh except the Gangetic Plains.

Rock art in Uttar Pradesh covers a wide span in time from circa 7,000 B.C. to the early medieval ages. The early rock art depicts mainly hunting scenes besides giving a glimpse of ancient beliefs, rituals and stories portraying other normal activities such as dancing. They are simple outline figures filled in with colours. The brushwork is sophisticated for its time, and numerous techniques have been used to enhance the paintings. Kohbar, Lorikayan scenes and auspicious handprints are still a living tradition.

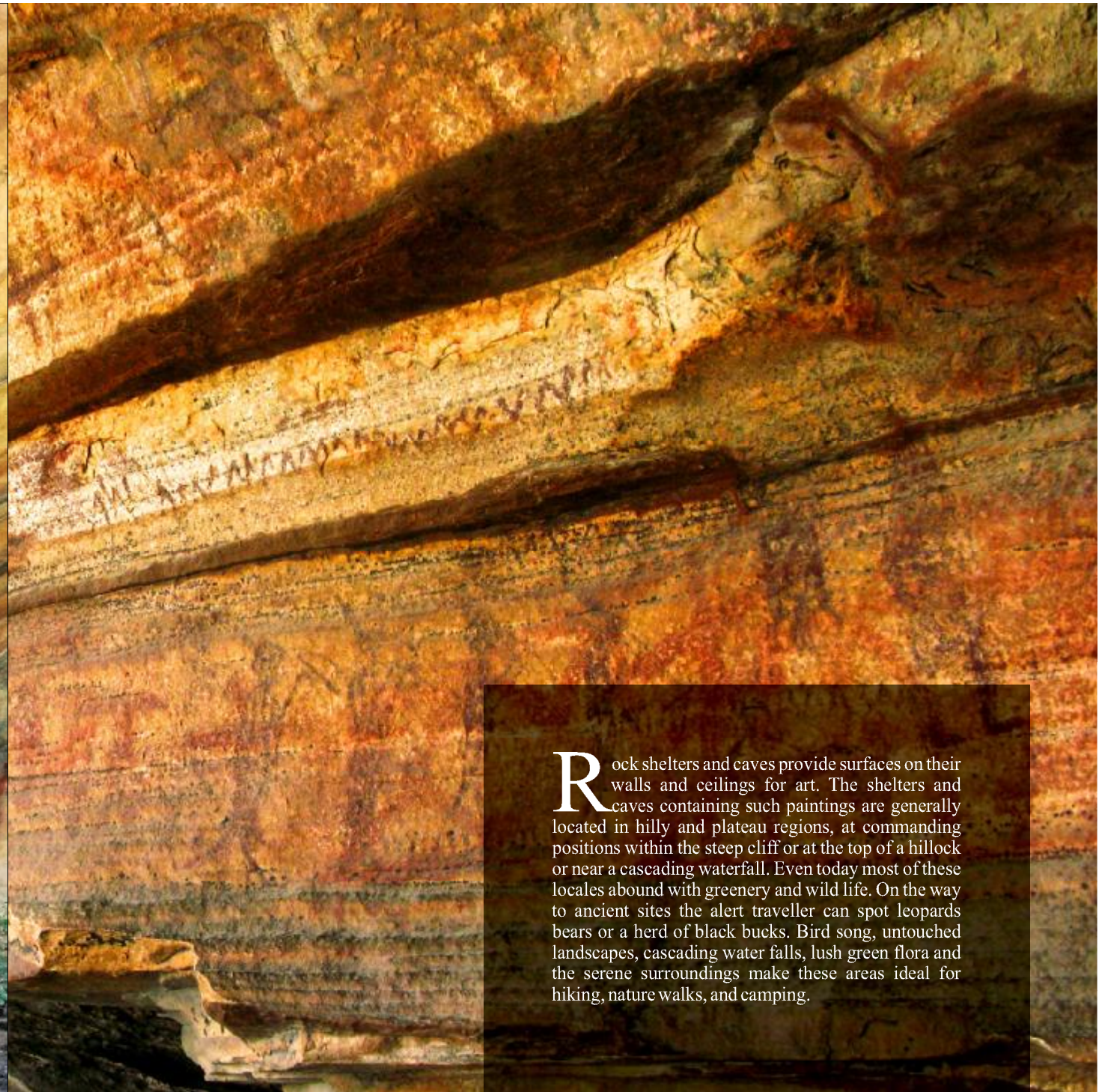
The painted rock shelters are generally located in narrow gorges of waterfalls or hill ranges. They present breathtaking vistas of the surrounding landscape with its gnarled and twisted trees, boulders and rocks in fantastic shades of colours and streams flowing through the land. These areas teeming with wild flora and animals are ideal for picnics and camping for a long getaway or a quick visit while in Varanasi.

Sites of Rock Art in Chandauli, Mirzapur and Sonbhadra districts have lovely waterfalls, lush jungles, fossil forests and rich wild life. These sites are easily approachable from Varanasi, Allahabad Jhansi and Agra.

Further advice and information regarding the transport and other tourist facilities available in the area may be obtained from the Regional Tourist offices at Varanasi and Allahabad.

The text and illustrations for this publication have been procured from the Directorate of the U.P. State Archaeology. Since it is aimed to give basic information to the tourists we have taken care to use simple language. Those interested in more academic information may contact the Directorate of Archaeology..

Awanish Kumar Awasthi
Secretary, Tourism & Culture
Government of Uttar Pradesh



Rock shelters and caves provide surfaces on their walls and ceilings for art. The shelters and caves containing such paintings are generally located in hilly and plateau regions, at commanding positions within the steep cliff or at the top of a hillock or near a cascading waterfall. Even today most of these locales abound with greenery and wild life. On the way to ancient sites the alert traveller can spot leopards bears or a herd of black bucks. Bird song, untouched landscapes, cascading water falls, lush green flora and the serene surroundings make these areas ideal for hiking, nature walks, and camping.



Indian Rock Paintings

In India, painted rock shelters are located in all the hilly terrains, from the Himalayan regions in the north to the southern hills in Tamilnadu and Kerala, from Rajasthan/ Gujarat in the west to Jharkhand in the east. Since ages these paintings are very well known to the local people with specific appellations, such as Rakat-ki-putarian (figures depicted in blood), Lorika-ka-darna (Lorik's dwelling), Kohbar (a particular ritual motif depicted in a residential room during the Hindu marriages), Hathia-ke-likhani (depiction of elephants), Sita ji-ka Kohbar (ritual paintings related to Sita's marriage), Lekhania (the place with writing) and so on. Lorik is a local hero; his deeds are sung as folklores known as Lorikayana in a large area of eastern India including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. Sita is the most worshipped deity, the

wife of Rama, famous Ikshavaku king of Ayodhya. It may be noted here that 'Chitrakuta,' a well-known and sacred site, where, according to ancient literature, Rama stayed for some time during his exile, means - a hill (kuta) of figures (chitra). The antiquity of the related literature goes back to early centuries AD. Though this literature does not describe the paintings of this hillock, apparently, its name appears to have been derived from them.

A.C.L. Carlyle, first assistant in the Archaeological Survey of India, discovered India's first painted rock shelters at Sohagi Hills in district Mirzapur (Uttar Pradesh), during the year 1867-68. It was much before the reporting of rock paintings anywhere else in the world. Thereafter, J. Cockburn an officer of the Opium Department discovered a large number of painted rock shelters in district Mirzapur (including the newly carved district of Sonbhadra) during 1881 onwards and published their details in research journals. Since then, except the alluvial plains of the Ganga and Sindh, European and Indian explorers all over India have reported existence of hundreds of painted rock shelters. Consequently India is now known as one of the richest centres of painted rock shelters. Considering their significance the rock painting of Bhimbetka (Madhya Pradesh), discovered by the famous explorer and rock-art scholar Padma Shri V.S. Wakankar, have been included in the World Heritage List.

Top Left
Rock painting at Raja Ka Baitkha, Lakhania rock shelter, Kaimur, Sonbhadra

Bottom Left
Rock painting at Matahwa rock shelter, Sonbhadra

Top Right
Rock painting at Ghoramangal rock shelter, Sonbhadra

Bottom Right
Rock painting at Bhaldaria rock shelter, Mirzapur - Discovered by J. Cockburn in 1883





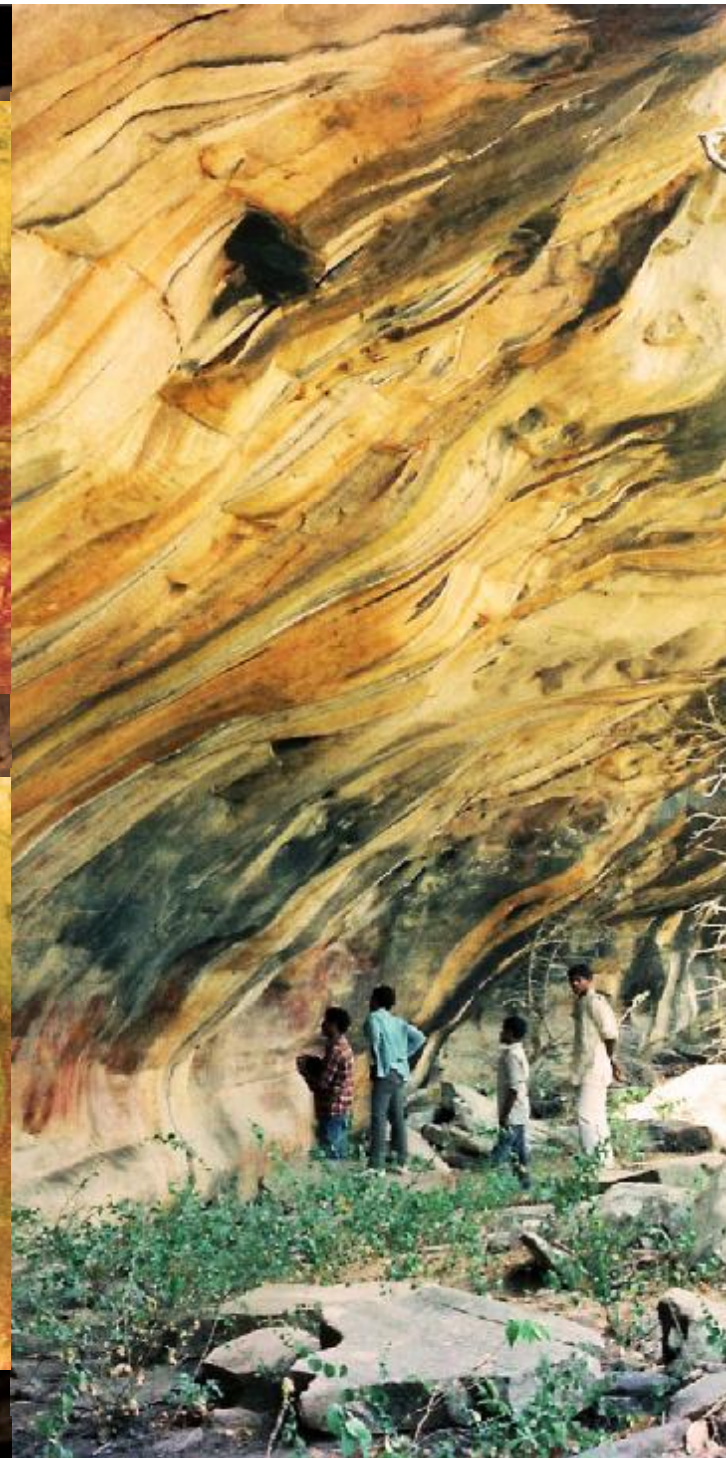
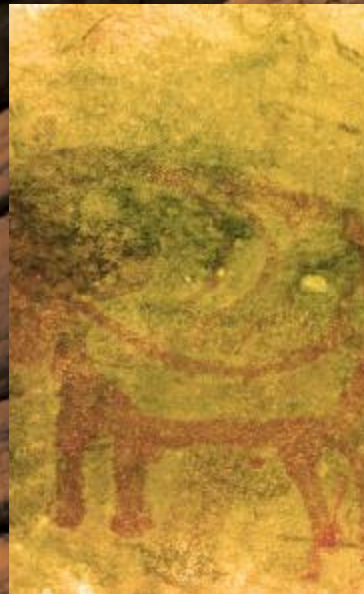
Colours

The colours used for painting are mostly different shades of ochre. Sometimes they are light or faded and are seen only when wet. Others are bright shades of blood red, chocolate brown and black. The material used to prepare these colours is hematite, which is easily available all over the hilly regions of India. Some of the earliest rock paintings are executed in black colour. Outlines of some of the painted figures are drawn in black or dark ochre colours. Use of white colour for painting is also evident. Scientific analysis of the colours used in these paintings has shown that different shades of red colour were obtained from the oxides of the iron like hematite; black – from manganese oxides and white from Kaolin or limestone. These minerals would have been ground to obtain powder and mixed with water to prepare the colour.

The traditions for the preparation of mineral colours in tribal and rural areas of India and other countries suggest that besides water some other binding material like glue, resin or animal fat and the juices of various plants might have been used in preparation of the colours. The use of powdered hematite or geru, oil, sindur, juice of the bark or beans and other local flora to prepare colours is still prevalent amongst the tribal people of Mirzapur and other areas. According to folk beliefs, blood of tiger, elephant and other animals was used in the preparation of these colours. Ancient literature such as 'Vishnudharmottar Purana' also states that decoctions of Tulsi, Bhumimba, Champa, Kusha and Maulshri plants, milk and sindur provide permanency to the colours.

The use of egg and juice of orchid bulbs in the preparation of colours by the Australian aboriginal artists is well known. Fat, blood and albumen are supposed to be used in the colours in the Ice Age Europe. The colours prepared with the mixing of diluted blood, melted honey, albumen or vegetable juice is suggested regarding the rock paintings of Levant. The use of marrow, fat or hyrax-urine to prepare the colours for rock paintings is suggested in context of South Africa.

Considering the ethnographic traditions and circumstantial evidence it is probable that the brushes used for painting were made with thick or thin bamboo shoots, animal hair, feathers and porcupine quills, etc. The thin outlines and finer details might have been depicted with pointed brushes while the body was filled with darker colours. Some of the scholars are of the view that the hollow bamboos, leaf-cups and natural pits of the rocks must have been used as colour pots.



Top Extreme Left
Rock painting of Banda.

Bottom Extreme Left
Rock painting of Banda.

Center
Kaua Khoh rock shelter, Sonbhadra.



Rock Paintings In Uttar Pradesh

A part from Carllyele and Cockburn, number of people contributed to the discovery and study of rock art in Uttar Pradesh. Among them are Manoranjan Ghosh and Silverod (Archaeological Survey of India), Radha Kant Varma, Jagdish Gupta and V.D. Mishra (University of Allahabad), P.C. Pant (Banaras Hindu University), Yashodhar Mathpal (Bhim Tal), Ervin Neumayer (Austria), Giriraj Kumar (Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra), Vijay Kumar (Indian Police Service) and explorers from the Directorate of the U.P. State Archaeology. Some amateur enthusiasts have also made significant additions to these studies.

Due to their consistent efforts painted rock shelters and their details are known from districts Chandauli, Sonbhadra, Mirzapur, Allahabad, Chitrakoot and Banda in northern Vindhya and around Fatehpur Sikri, district Agra in the Aravalli ranges.

Location & Context

The rock paintings of Uttar Pradesh are usually portrayed on the smooth surface of small to large sized rock shelters. Some of them are as long as c. 100 m in length, c. 5 m broad and 5-7 m high. Smaller ones may measure c. 2 m in length and breadth and hardly c. 1.5 m in height. Kaua Khoh rock shelter at Khodwa Pahar in district Sonbhadra is one of the largest and rarest of them, which comprises hundreds of rock paintings of successive periods.

The location of rock shelters are difficult to access. Most of them are located on the steep sides of a hillock with an overhanging natural rock roof. Many of them are found in the narrow gorge of a waterfall. One may have a panoramic view of the surrounding landscape comprising river valleys, forests, hill ranges and so on. In a few cases, like Maan-Moon at Vijaygarh (district Sonbhadra) caves are also used for painting.

Mostly the same surface is used repeatedly without erasing the earlier ones. Consequently the later paintings are found superimposed on the earlier ones. Sometimes there are 6-7 or even more superimposed layers of painted compositions. Obviously they represent different periods in chronological order from the bottom layer to the top.

Some of the paintings are high up on walls and ceilings, which indicates that there might have been a rock in between, at the time when these paintings were made. The use of bamboo-ladders and scaffolding to approach the location is also possible. Selection of remotely located shelters and caves might have served the purpose of keeping their location a secret.

UTTAR PRADESH

INDIA





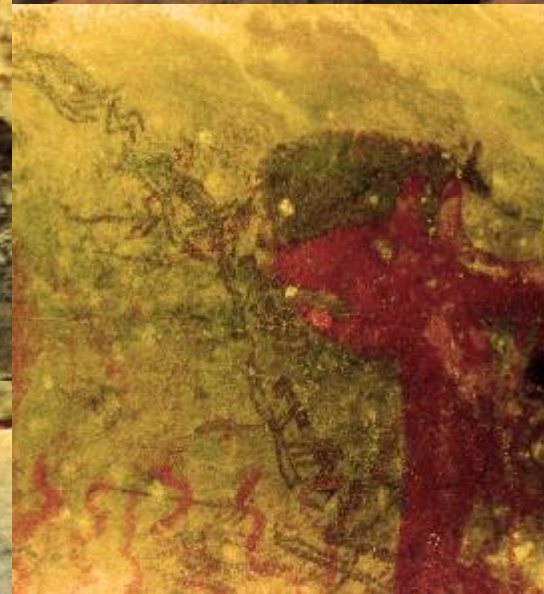
Themes, Traditions & Continuity

Some of the rock-art, particularly the dance, hunting and battle scenes are noteworthy. Dancers in a row; dancing independently; holding each other's hand or waist; in a circle, or in an indefinite file, dual or single may be seen in many rock shelters in different regions. Some times they are shown dancing with weapons in hand. Simple graceful lines show the fluidity of legs, body and arms in rhythm of dance.

A dance scene of Ghoramangar rock shelter of district Sonbhadra is reminiscent of the 'Frog-Dance' a ritual rain dance performed during periods of drought.

Another scene of dancers, dancing 'hand-in-hand' is like tribal dance form 'Karma' very popular in the Vindhyan and Chhota Nagpur hills in southeastern Uttar Pradesh-Bihar-Jharkhand-Chattisgarh-Madhya Pradesh.

At Kaua Khoh rock shelter (district Sonbhadra) the dance scenes show a high degree of expression and skill. Every dancer is shown in a distinctive dancing pose. They are holding barbed arrows, lances or harpoons. The main dancer, in a feathered and tasseled long headdress, is at the centre.



Center Top
Fine example of super imposed rock painting, Kaua Khoh, Sonbhadra.

Center Bottom
Superimposed rock painting at Kaua Khoh



Canvas, Themes & Superimpositions

Be a rock surface served the purpose of canvas for ancient painters. Mostly the paintings are portrayed directly on the surface of the rock without any ground preparation. These paintings comprise compositions on various themes. The earliest of them represented by those at lowest levels superimposed by the later ones show hunting, fishing, and battle and dance scenes. These paintings are portrayed with dark to light ochre or black pigments.

The depiction of archers, spear and harpoon holding hunters and animals appear like shadows. Harpoons, spears and barbed arrows form a large proportion of weapons. Their shapes indicate that they would have been made of bone, wood and stone artifacts. These themes indicate hunter-gathering way of life.

The animals, which are shown hunted, include deer, barasingha, nilgai, bison, rhino, etc. The most popular amongst them are the theme of deer hunting. Deer is quite often shown being hunted by archers shooting barbed arrows from all directions. The wounded prey finds no way to run away and is glancing back with wide-open eyes filled with deep agony and terror. The depictions of charging hunters and warriors, stretched bows, wounded and furious animals tossing a hunter in the air with their horns, are forceful and full of expression.



Antiquity

At present, we do not have any scientific method of dating to fix the precise chronology of the Indian rock paintings. Therefore circumstantial evidences comparative consideration and superimposition are taken in to fix the chronological context for dating. These evidences for the earliest rock paintings include microliths, floral and fauna remains, hematite nodules, and artifacts such as arrowheads. The earliest available radiocarbon dates for the organic material collected from these deposits from different rock shelters range around 6000-7000 BC (c. 8000 – 9000 yrs before present.) On the basis of these dates, rubbed hematite pieces and subject matter of the paintings the earliest Indian rock art are placed at least in that time-period. The developed and expressive art forms and style of depiction of the paintings however, suggest that their evolutionary phase and antiquity might be even earlier to this estimate.

The subject matter of the subsequent phases of rock paintings show more sedentary themes such as groups of men and women, standing or moving, engaged in food gathering, tree climbing, holding the rope of domesticated animals, honey collection, and, of course, hunting and gathering and fishing and so on.

Handprints painted, stamped or depicted by spray technique is another popular and notable motif. Generally the paintings are monochrome. Some times, bi-chrome paintings are also seen, usually with white or yellowish outlines. Varied headgears of hunters and dancers look very attractive. X ray style of paintings showing skeletal features and factors within the stomach are the most characteristic feature.

Load bearers, men and women depicted in triangular form in a row holding each others hands, boat rowers, human figures with sexual overtones, cattle including humped bull are the characteristic features of the next trend in the subsequent compositions. The sharp and angular shape of the arrowheads and spears-heads shown in the paintings of

hunting scenes decreases and those showing animals in herds become more in number. Paintings of dancers holding hands and certain human figures are comparable with those found on chalcolithic pottery.

Painted compositions showing carts and chariots and cattle with large horns mark another set of paintings superimposed on earlier paintings. Further, some of the painted motifs represent symbols comparable with those on certain coins known as punch marked coins of the early historic period preceding the beginning of the Christian era.

Painted rock inscriptions in Brahmi script are easily datable to 2nd century BC. They include personal names and sometimes only a few letters. A recently discovered painted minor rock edict of the great Mauryan king Ashok in the Kaimur range near U.P. - Bihar border is an example of this.

Some of the rock paintings are inscriptions in Gupta Brahmi and very stylistic Sankh script, which represent a time-span of c. 300-700 AD (about 1700 – 1300 yrs old from today). Crossed lines generally show the figures of this period. Alpana designs still popular in the present day folk art are often seen along with these inscriptions. The costume of some of the human figures resembles the long apron type coats marked in the Indian sculptural art of the early centuries of the Christian era.

Subsequent rock paintings may be distinguished by the depiction of dated and undated Nagari Inscriptions. Some times tridents and musical instruments are also included in the artifacts shown in the painted compositions. Human figures are depicted with simple lines for the respective genitals along with various domestic and wild animals. The peacock is the most popular motif amongst the birds. Putting the hand palm comprising wet colour on the rock surface mostly makes handprints of this period.

Top Left
Xray style rock painting at Lakhma rock shelter, Sonbhadra.

Bottom Left
Xray style rock painting at Gochhra rock shelter, Sonbhadra.

Top Right
Hunting scene at Kaula Khoh rock shelter, Sonbhadra.

Bottom Right
Detail of Xray style rock painting at Lakhma rock shelter, Sonbhadra.





Left
Dance scene at Hathwani rock shelter, Sonbhadra.
Bottom
Dance scene Kaua Khoh rock shelter, Sonbhadra.



The paintings of the hunt scenes have many commonalities. They show the prey being attacked from all the directions by the hunters and archers with multi-barbed spears, arrows, lances and spears. The prey is shown wounded by several arrows, and spears embedded into his body. Some times a hunter tossed by the animal is shown suspended in the air. Blood-drops oozing from the wounds of the prey are also shown in a few paintings.

Left
Hunting scene at Matahiwa rock shelter, Sonbhadra.

Bottom Left
Rhino hunt scene at Panchmukhi rock shelter.

Bottom Center
Hunting scene Kava Khoh rock shelter, Sonbhadra.

Bottom Right
Hunting scene Kava Khoh rock shelter, Sonbhadra.





Some of the human figures and other motifs depicted in the rock paintings are comparable to the motifs being portrayed during certain rituals even today. For example human figurines, hand prints and alpna patterns comparable to those depicted in the rock paintings may be seen portrayed in the Kohbar, which are depicted on the walls of a room of the bride's house during the marriage rituals.

Handprints, usually in white or ochre colours, stamped or sprayed on the outer walls on either side of the entrance door of the village houses and in the sanctum of some the temples show their continuity from a tradition evidenced in the rock paintings from thousands of years. This motif is considered pious, which prevents evil spirits from entering the dwellings. Its sanctity is also corroborated by the ritual of stamping turmeric-dipped hands on the back of grooms in the Indian marriage ceremonies.

Various patterns of hair-do (kesh pash) of the human figures depicted in the rock paintings are comparable with the buns and head gears of those shown in the sculptures shaped in the subsequent period. Many of them may also be compared with the modern hair-do.

Paintings showing domestic animals, tree climbing and fruit gathering, honey collection, fishing, rowing, agriculture and other day-to-day activities provide a glimpse of the life of the early people.

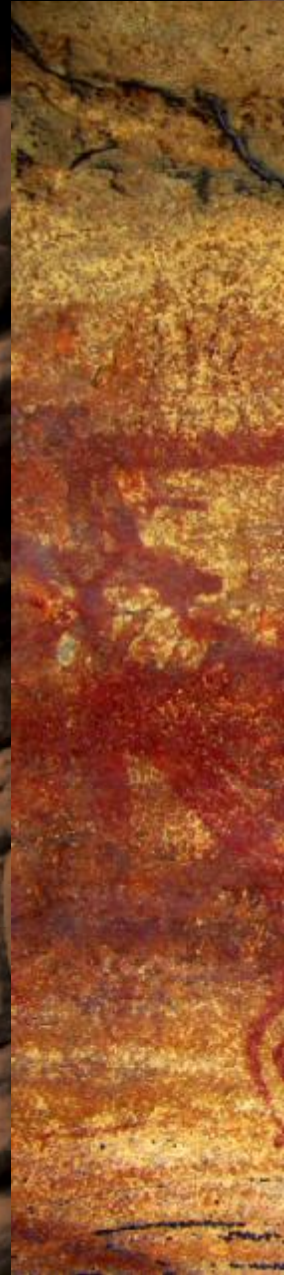


Left Top
Rock painting at Lakhania rock shelter, Kaimur, Sonbhadra.

Left Center
Hand impression, Lakhania rock shelter, Kaimur, Sonbhadra..

Left Bottom
Rock painting of procession of human figures, Lakhania rock shelter, Kaimur, Sonbhadra.

Right
Raja Ka Baitkha, Lakhania rock shelter, Kaimur, Sonbhadra.



One of the earliest and rarest battle scenes depicted in the Kaua Khoh rock shelter comprises rows of archers facing and shooting barbed arrow on each other. Some of the later battle scenes seem to be narrating popular folk stories of the region.

A large composition from the Kaua Khoh rock shelter needs to be mentioned in this context. Two six-armed twin-faced figurines and a giant warrior are depicted in this scene. The warrior is four times larger than the other figures. Holding an elephant in his hands above his shoulders while his feet trample an elephant beneath. This figure may be associated with a very popular folklore of eastern U.P., Bihar and surrounding areas – known as Lorikayana. The velour and super natural strength of the hero of this song the 'Lorika' is highly acclaimed. This story narrates that the goddess 'Sharada' accompanied by sixty-four pairs of 'Yoginis' herself adorned his flag and helped him in the battlefield. It is also mentioned that he single handedly pulled out an elephant from a pond (“dahina naa hath dhare ponchh, Lorika deles hantha kabaar”) and flung this heavy creature in the air in war (“tangari pakar ke phenke hathi ke tab ghumay”). He is said to have crossed the Son River in one go, traversed the distance between two forts in one leap, and cut a huge rock in two pieces with a single stroke of his mighty sword. The folklore describes him entering the battlefield swaying like an elephant from side-to-side and roaring like a lion, adorned with fifty-six knives and a dagger, a shield, a belt made of python skin and heavy Armour.

Chalatare Lorik jaise chale ho matwal /
Chhappan churi gahela paini gahe katar,
Bain dabe aadani suruma dahinwe hathiar//
Khinchat Na peti ganjade ka
Ab bir anav pahirat baye anrakhi
Godawa gulbadan Taman ab pher banhat
Peti ajar ka, jame goli chipatwa ho jaye/
dehiyan kasat jirahi loh wala,
jeme nau man loha aman/
bain bole bighin bole lo he kankaar/
maiya pujeli dhaja par ho gaili taiyaar/
chausath joda jogin je kar sang mei mendaraay/
Lorika ke kaile baa devi anchorwa ka apnaa chhaanv/

Mulla Daud, a medieval writer, penned his famous work Chandayan with the tale of Lorika and Chanda in the 14th century AD. Its manuscripts comprising illustrations on this theme are in the collection of different museums in India and abroad, such as Bharat Kala Bhawan (Varnasi), Chandigarh Museum and Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay in India, Central Museum, Lahore and National Museum, Karachi (in Pakistan), John Rylands Library, Manchester (in U.K.) and Staatsbibliothek, Berlin (in Germany).

The depiction of Lorika-episode of Kaua Khoh may be placed well before the 14th century BC; therefore it seems to be the earliest portrayal of this story. The credit for the same goes to the ancient painters inhabiting the Vindhyan region.

Left
Lorikayan scene, Kaua Khoh rock shelter, Sonbhadra.

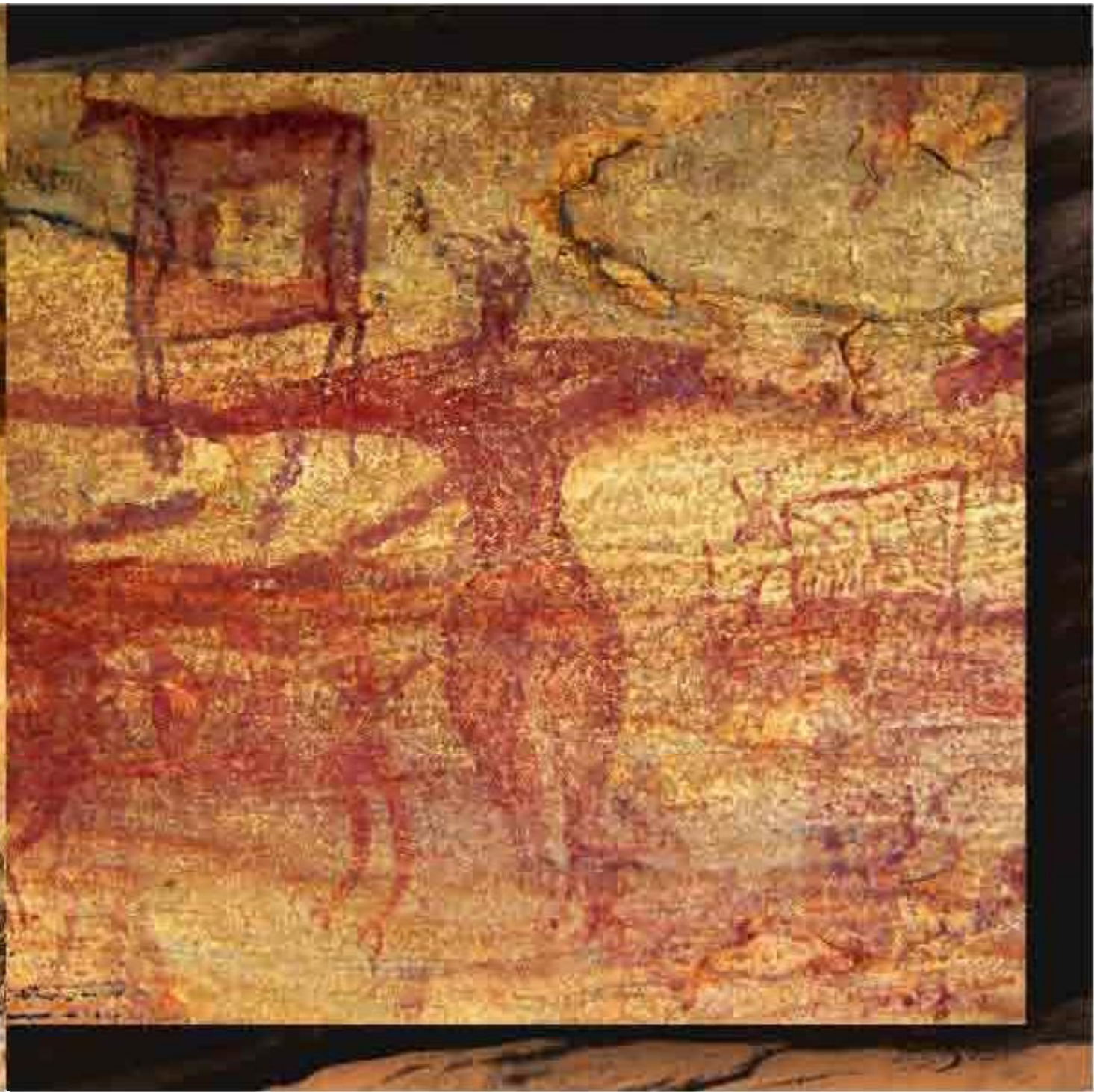
Bottom
Rock painting of archer at Kaua Khoh rock shelter, Sonbhadra.





Left
Fishing scene Kaua Khoh, Sonbhadra.

Above
Rock painting of boating in river Son, Kaua Khoh rock shelter, Sonbhadra.





Purpose Of The Paintings

There is no consensus about the reasons why these rock-paintings were made. Various theories have been advanced – artistic expression, proto-language, totemic symbolism, appeasement of supernatural deities, magic rituals to help in hunting, or just a sacred place for initiating youngsters into society.

Left
Hand imprint at Matahwa, Bhulaia, Sonbhadra.

Right
Rock painting at Ramana Pahar, Sonbhadra.





Other Destinations

Ghurhupur rock shelters are about 60 km to the east of Chakia in the northern scarp of the Kaimur hills on the border of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. A steep climb leads to the rock shelters. Inside the shelters are the ancient paintings and inscriptions painted on their walls and ceilings. Some of them are related with Buddhist motifs.

Further east, on another hill in one of the rock shelters, an inscription identified as minor rock edict of the Mauryan Emperor, i.e. Ashoka the Great, has been discovered recently. Between this shelter and Nindaur is a circular structure made of square stone blocks which is supposed to be representing an ancient Buddhist stupa.

In Chakia are the painted rock shelters of the Ama Chuan (a waterfall). Close by are Malhar and Phakkada Baba on the right bank of the Karamnasa River, ancient sites for iron production. In the Karamnasa River crocodiles abound in its green waters. On a lucky day leopards, bears and wild pigs can be spotted. Musa khand dam and the celebrated waterfalls of Latifshah, Rajdari and Chandraprabha are not far away from Chakia.



Tourist Destinations

Some of the rock art sites in Chandauli, Mirzapur and Sonbhadra districts in Uttar Pradesh are attractive tourist destinations. These sites are ideally located close to some of the most popular tourist destinations in India – Varanasi and Allahabad.

The district headquarters of Robertsganj in Sonbhadra district 90 kms. from Varanasi is an ideal place to visit these cave and rock shelters as well as the Fossil Park in Salkhan and the Kaimur wildlife Sanctuary.

Rock Paintings in Mirzapur & Sonbhadra

The Vindhya and the Kaimur ranges have at least 250 rock art sites spread across them. The Rock paintings range from the Mesolithic to the chalcolithic ages. Among important Rock painting sites found in the region are - the Panchmukhi Rock Shelters (8 km from Robertsganj), Kauva Khoh Rock Shelters (near Churk), Lakhania Rock Shelters (22 km, from Robertsganj) & Lakhma caves (near Baghma).

Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary

Thirteen kilometers from Robertsganj, spread over an area of 500 sq. km, the sanctuary has a variety of wildlife. The Mukha waterfall is a tourist attraction. Other excursions include Jaunpur (58 km), Allahabad (128 km) and the Vindham and Chachai falls.

Fossil Park Salkhan, Sonbhadra

15 Kms from Robertsganj on Chopan Road this is the oldest botanical fossil found in the world. The tree fossils, which are covering 25 hectares or park, date back to Meso-Proterozoic period. They are said to be about 1400 million years old. The types of fossils found in the area are algae and Stromatolites. The park is three times larger than the Yellow Stone Park of America.



About two-three km to the south of Mau Kalan is the famous fort of Bijaygarh or Vijaygarh. This fort is built on the top of a cashew-nut shaped hillock. Painted inscriptions in the Man and Moon caves located in the western cliff below the fort are probably the personal names of pilgrims who visited this place from time to time for religious purposes. These names also mark the antiquity of the human activity in the vicinity. An inscription in Nagari script is also found in the larger cave which refers to a saint who visited this place in the month of Vaishakh in Samvat 1404. There is a natural source of water inside the fort in a central position which has been converted into an artificial reservoir. It is known as Ram Sagar Talab and is considered very sacred amongst the local people. An inscribed slab placed in a wall of the northern gate which mentions the names of king Narvarmma and kottapal (in-charge of the fort) Damodar Bhatt attest that



Naugarh fort (about 40 km south to Chakia). It is situated on the left bank of the Karamnasa .. Presently, it houses a government rest house. The remains scattered around it attest to the 3000 years of history of the site As at Geruwatwa Pahar, the area to its north and north-west abounds with the slag and furnace remains on either sides of a small stream which meets the Karamnasa, which forms a beautiful waterfall flowing further downstream to the northeast of Naugarh.

Ahraura (about 40 km south to Varanasi) is situated on the ancient cross-roads leading in the alignments of Nindaur-Pataliputra in the east, Varanasi and beyond in the north, Son Valley in the south and Chunar onwards in the west. A minor rock edict is inscribed on a rock on the adjoining hillock of Bhandari Devi Pahar to its north. The surrounding lush green paddy fields, interrupted by water stretches is entrancing , especially in the rainy season. A small mound, to the southwest of this hillock, represents the ancient fortified settlement. A stone pillar standing to the south of Ahraura bears an inscription which narrates the brave deeds of a king. Painted rock shelters of Lorika-ka-darna, Sham devi-ka-pahar, Likhania dari and Bhdalaria dari are located in the hillocks to the south of Ahraura.

Passing the Garai River Bridge (5 km from Ahraura) on the way to Robertsganj, are the ancient rock-paintings executed on the rock surface along the left cliff of the Likhania water-fall. These paintings showing elephant and horse riders in dark and light shades of ochre colour belong to the medieval period.

Further south is Bhdalaria on the road leading south to Robertsganj. These paintings were discovered by Cockburn along the right cliff of this water-fall in 1883. The depictions of a wounded wild boar and a deer (sambhar) being hunted with a spear, in this rock shelter, along with a row of seated birds, have become hall mark of the rock paintings of Mirzapur.



About 40 km to the west of Robertsganj is the Mukha dari water-fall on the Belan River, which is located within a Reserve Forest. The best place for camping to enjoy this area is the Shivadwar, famous for its Shiva temple and its beautiful black stone Uma-Mahesvar image installed in the sanctum. The architectural and sculptural remains scattered here and there in the villages of this area and collected in a newly constructed site museum in Shivadwar are worth seeing for their superb craftsmanship. Some of the panels displayed in the site museum show Ramayana themes such as 'Bali-Sugriva yuddha' and a scene from 'Ashok vaatika.' Rama holding an arch in the charging position and Ravana seated on a throne are notable in the respective scenes. Another panel related to the Mahabharata epic story comprises the depiction of Balaram and Krishna standing together, arm resting on each other's shoulder.

On the Mukha Dari Falls About 50 meters or so, within a shallow rock shelter projected from the left cliff are paintings of elephants with raised trunks, human figures in dancing posture, rows of large fishes etc.





Chunar



this fort was in existence during the 7th-8th century AD (about 1200-1300 years before present).

To the southeast and southwest of the Bijaygarh fort are located the painted rock shelters of Harna-Harni and Mathwa. Famous rhino hunt scene published by Cockburn in the nineteenth century is depicted in an umbrella like rounded rock shelter located on a hill called Ghora-Mangar. This name was coined, because this hill looks like a horse from a distance and a near by pool was inhabited by crocodiles. This rock shelter can be approached by foot on a pathway which branches off from the forest road leading to the Chirui-Markuri villages on the top of Khodwa Pahar. Several other rock painting sites, Kerwa or Kirwa, Lakhama, Gochara, Kaua Khoh and Hathwania, etc. are located around these villages.





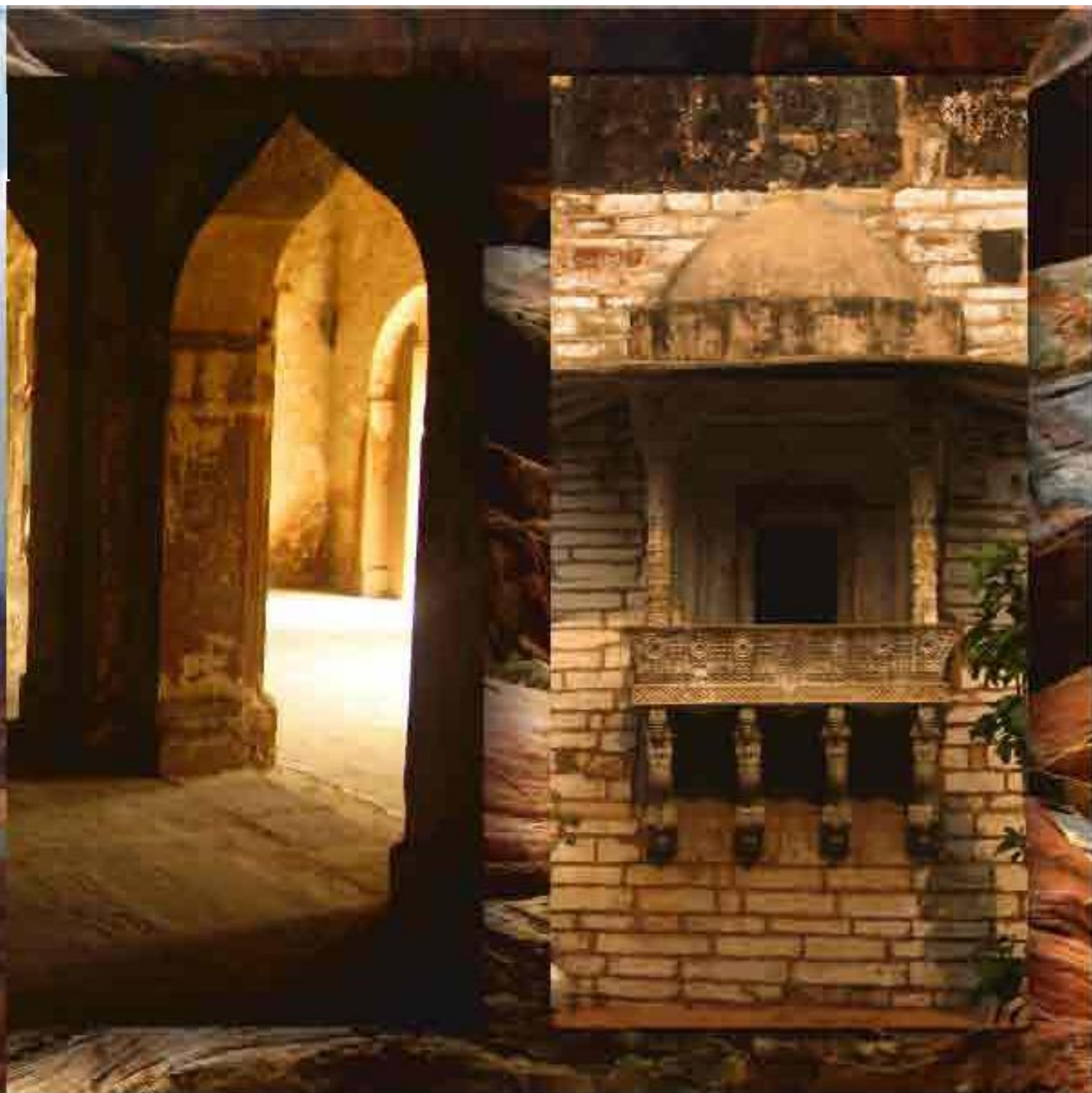
Extreme Left
Clock Tower, Mirzapur.

Center Top
Detail of Clock Tower, Mirzapur.

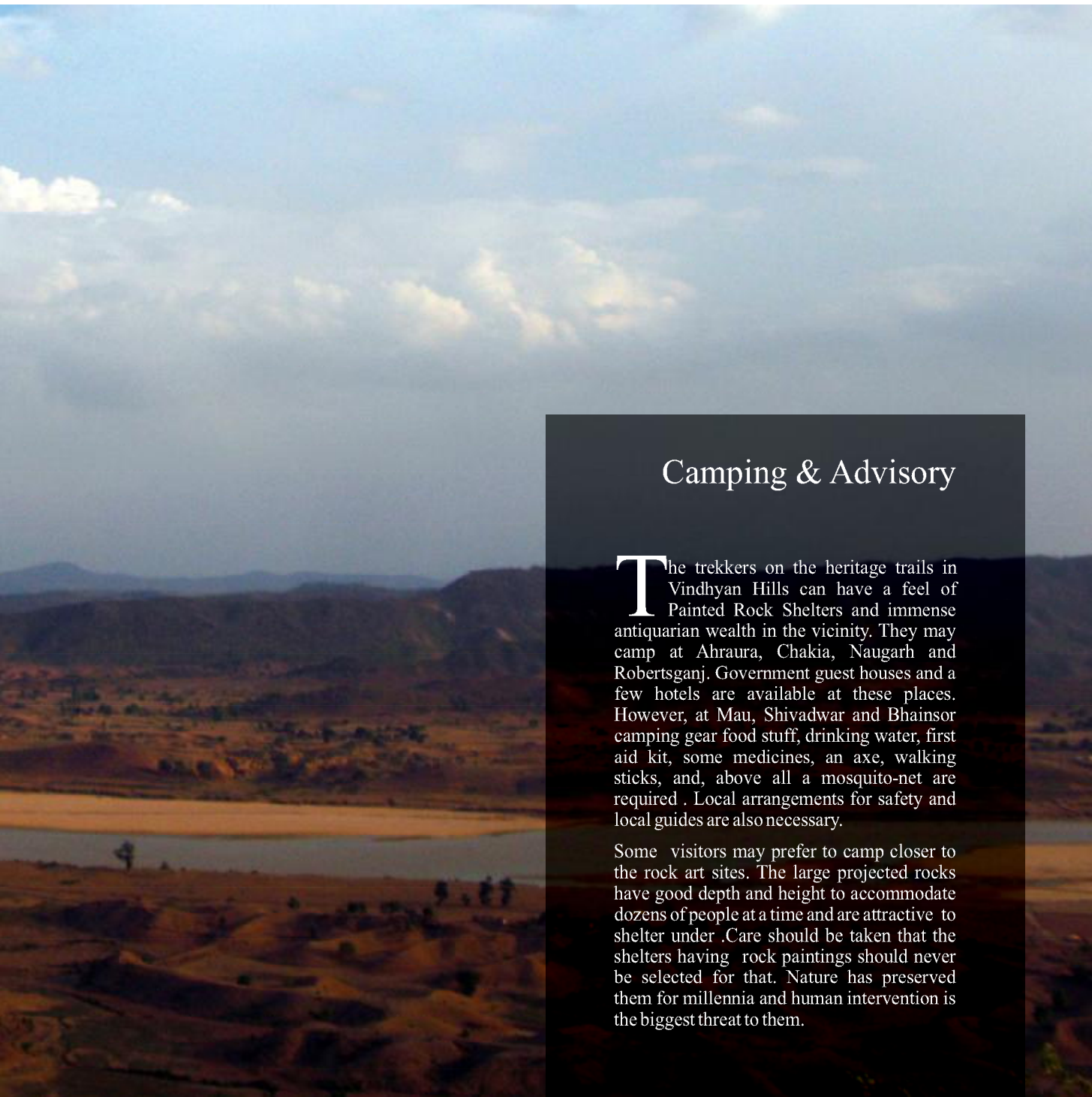
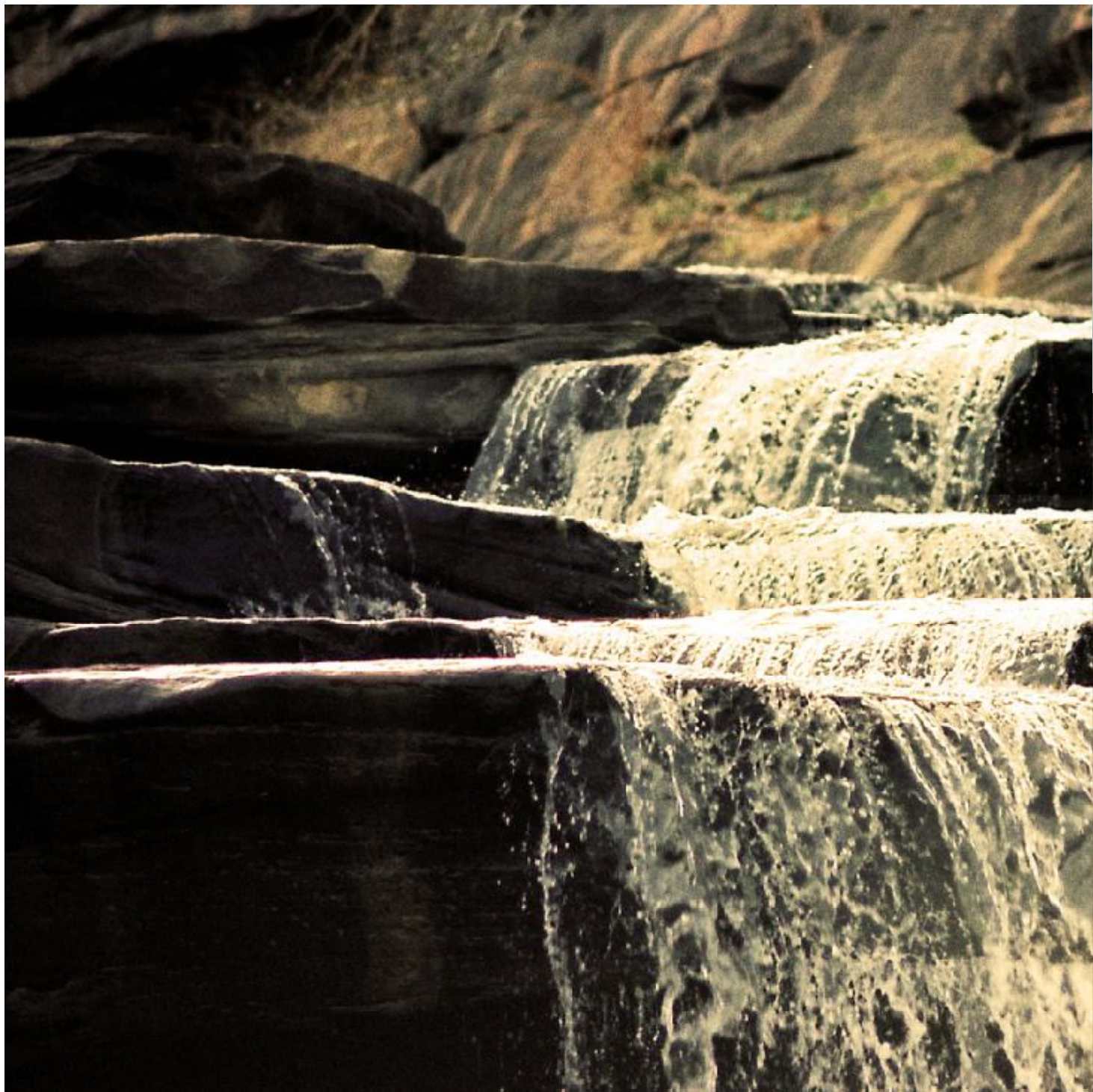
Center Bottom
Section of Wyndam Falls, Mirzapur.

Bottom Right & Extreme Right
Details of Clock Tower, Mirzapur.

Bhainsor is located to the south of Mirzapur at a distance of about 65 km from the district headquarters at Mirzapur on Rewa road near the borders of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. It is on the north Vindhyan hills, which stands to the south of Drummondganj, locally known as Muda Pahar. Hanumana is the nearest town in Madhya Pradesh further south from Bhainsor. As compared to the other rock art areas, the surrounding area is presently very dry. Water resources are few. In summer drinking water is difficult to procure. A number of painted rock shelters have been found in the surrounding hills. Most important among those are Lekhahia, Nimbahiya Mayra, Muni Baba, Marchahia, Thari Pathari, Baga, Baghai Khor and Mura. The nearest guest house available around Bhainsor is at Drummondganj. Reservations can be done from Mirzapur district headquarters.







Camping & Advisory

The trekkers on the heritage trails in Vindhyan Hills can have a feel of Painted Rock Shelters and immense antiquarian wealth in the vicinity. They may camp at Ahraura, Chakia, Naugarh and Robertsganj. Government guest houses and a few hotels are available at these places. However, at Mau, Shivadwar and Bhainsor camping gear food stuff, drinking water, first aid kit, some medicines, an axe, walking sticks, and, above all a mosquito-net are required. Local arrangements for safety and local guides are also necessary.

Some visitors may prefer to camp closer to the rock art sites. The large projected rocks have good depth and height to accommodate dozens of people at a time and are attractive to shelter under. Care should be taken that the shelters having rock paintings should never be selected for that. Nature has preserved them for millennia and human intervention is the biggest threat to them.