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Prehistoric Goa

The rock art of Goa

The rock art of Goa, a state on the southwestern coast of India, offers a glimpse into the prehistoric and ancient cultural heritage of the region. These artworks are typically found in the form of petroglyphs (rock carvings) and pictographs (rock paintings). Here are some notable aspects of Goa's rock art:

1. Usgalimal Petroglyphs

- **Location:** Usgalimal, in the Sanguem taluka of South Goa.
- **Description:** Beyond geometric patterns and animal figures, Pansoimol also showcases unique motifs like a human figure with outstretched arms, possibly symbolizing a deity or shamanic figure. The presence of labyrinthine designs suggests a connection to ritualistic practices or cosmological beliefs.This site features a collection of petroglyphs on laterite stone, depicting various animals such as bulls, deer, and human figures. These carvings are believed to date back to the Upper Paleolithic period, making them among the oldest known art forms in India.

2. Pansaimol Rock Art

- **Location:** Pansaimol, near the Kushavati river in the Quepem taluka of South Goa.
- **Description:** The engravings here feature a prominent image of a humped bull, indicating the cultural significance of cattle in prehistoric societies. Other interesting motifs include depictions of peacocks, dancing figures, and enigmatic symbols, leaving room for interpretation and speculation.The site contains petroglyphs carved into laterite stone, showing a range of motifs, including animals, human figures, and geometric patterns. These carvings are thought to date back to the Mesolithic period.

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3. Kazur Rock Art

- **Location:** Near the village of Kazur in the Sattari taluka of North Goa.
- **Description:** Besides animal depictions and cupules, Kajur also boasts a series of concentric circles interconnected by channels, resembling a network or map. These enigmatic carvings continue to baffle researchers and ignite curiosity about their intended meaning.This site features rock carvings that depict scenes from daily life, including hunting and dancing. The carvings provide insights into the social and cultural practices of the ancient inhabitants of the region.

Significance

- **Cultural Insight:** The rock art sites in Goa offer valuable insights into the lives, beliefs, and practices of early human societies in the region. They provide evidence of prehistoric human settlement and their interaction with the environment.
- **Artistic Value:** The petroglyphs and pictographs are not only significant archaeological artifacts but also hold artistic value, showcasing the creativity and expression of ancient communities.

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Conservation

- **Challenges:** The rock art sites in Goa face challenges such as weathering, erosion, and vandalism. Conservation efforts are needed to preserve these ancient artworks for future generations.
- **Efforts:** Local authorities, archaeologists, and heritage conservationists are working to document, protect, and promote awareness about these sites.

The rock art of Goa is an essential part of India's rich archaeological heritage, offering a window into the prehistoric era and the cultural evolution of the region's early inhabitants.
Tools**:**

- **Mauxi:** Excavations at this Neolithic site have unearthed a collection of polished stone axes, adzes, and chisels, showcasing the advanced craftsmanship and woodworking skills of the inhabitants.
- **Chandor:** The Chalcolithic settlement at Chandor reveals a variety of tools made from copper and bronze, such as knives, fishhooks, and bangles, highlighting a flourishing metalworking tradition and long-distance trade connections.
- **Laterite Caves:** These natural shelters, found in areas like Tambdi Surla, reveal evidence of human occupation in the form of charcoal remains, pottery fragments, and rudimentary stone tools.

Paleolithic and Mesolithic tools:

- **Hand axes and cleavers:** These large, bifacial tools were used for chopping wood, butchering animals, and other heavy-duty tasks.
- **Scrapers:** These smaller tools were used for scraping hides, preparing food, and other precision tasks.
- **Points:** These sharp, pointed tools were used as spearheads, arrowheads, and knives.
- **Microliths:** These tiny, geometrically shaped tools were hafted onto wooden shafts to create composite tools like arrows, sickles, and harpoons.

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Neolithic and Chalcolithic tools:

- **Axes and adzes:** These polished stone tools were used for woodworking, clearing land, and constructing houses.
- **Chisels and gouges:** These tools were used for carving and shaping wood and other materials.
- **Grinding stones and mortars:** These tools were used for grinding grain, preparing food, and making pigments.
- **Pottery:** Pottery shards found at various sites provide evidence of early pottery-making techniques and styles.
- **Copper and bronze tools:** In the later Chalcolithic period, tools made of copper and bronze, such as knives, fishhooks, and ornaments, start appearing.

Iron Age tools:

- **Iron axes, hoes, and sickles:** These tools were used for agriculture, clearing land, and harvesting crops.

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- **Iron swords, daggers, and spearheads:** These weapons indicate the existence of warfare and conflict during this period.
- **Iron nails, chisels, and other implements:** These tools were used for construction, carpentry, and other crafts.

Other notable finds:

- **Shell tools:** In coastal areas like Agonda, tools made from shells, such as scrapers, knives, and ornaments, have been found.
- **Bone tools:** Tools made from bone, such as needles, awls, and ornaments, have been found at various sites.
- **Terracotta figurines:** These figurines provide insights into the religious beliefs and artistic expressions of ancient Goans.

Prehistoric Settlements of Goa**:**

Goa's prehistoric settlements reveal a fascinating tapestry of human habitation and cultural evolution spanning thousands of years. While concrete evidence is limited due to the perishable nature of early settlements and subsequent natural and human disturbances, archaeological excavations and findings have shed light on various prehistoric sites across the state.

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Paleolithic and Mesolithic Settlements:

- **Dabolim:** Excavations near the Dabolim airport have unearthed evidence of a Paleolithic settlement, with discoveries of stone tools like hand axes, cleavers, and scrapers, suggesting the presence of early human ancestors in the region.
- **Agonda:** This coastal site showcases a Mesolithic settlement, evidenced by shell middens containing fish bones, shells, and microliths. The inhabitants of Agonda likely relied on marine resources for sustenance.
- **Tambdi Surla:** The laterite caves in this area are believed to have served as shelters for prehistoric people during the Mesolithic period, with evidence of charcoal remains, pottery fragments, and rudimentary stone tools.

Neolithic and Chalcolithic Settlements:

- **Mauxi:** Excavations at Mauxi have revealed a Neolithic settlement, characterized by the presence of polished stone axes, adzes, chisels, pottery shards, and animal bones. The inhabitants engaged in agriculture and practiced animal husbandry.
- **Chandor:** This site showcases a Chalcolithic settlement, with evidence of mud-brick houses, pottery, beads, and metal objects made of copper and bronze. The community at Chandor likely engaged in agriculture, trade, and metalworking.
- **Lamgau Caves:** These caves near Bicholim are believed to have been inhabited during the Neolithic period, with evidence of rock art, stone tools, and animal bones.

Iron Age Settlements:

- **Dabolim:** Further excavations at Dabolim have revealed an Iron Age settlement, characterized by the presence of iron tools, pottery, and evidence of iron smelting. The inhabitants transitioned to iron technology and engaged in agriculture and metallurgy.

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