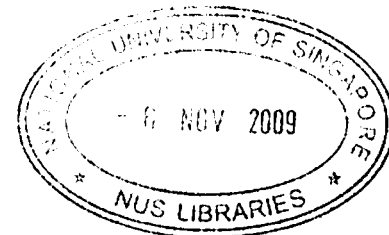


# Riddles of Indian Rockshelter Paintings

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Table 10.6 Excavated faunal material from mesolithic sites (After Thomas, 1975)

Species	Adamgarh	Lahanganj	Bagor
<b>I Mammals</b>			
<b>CARNIVORA</b>			
1. Dog <i>Canis familiaris</i> +	-	-	-
2. Wolf <i>canis lupus</i> +	-	-	-
3. Mongoose <i>Herpestes</i> - sp	+	-	-
<b>PERISSODACTYLA</b>			
1. Horse, Ass <i>Equus sp</i> +	-	-	-
2. Rhinoceros <i>Rhinoceros</i> - <i>unicornis</i>	+	-	-
<b>ARTIODACTYLA</b>			
1. Zebu <i>Bos indicus</i> +	-	-	-
2. Buffalo <i>Bubalus</i> + <i>bubalis</i>	-	+	+
3. Barasingha <i>cervus</i> + <i>unicolor</i>	+	-	-
4. Sambar <i>cervus</i> + <i>unicolor</i>	-	+	+
5. Chital <i>Axis</i> +	+	+	+
6. Hogdear <i>Axis</i> -	+	-	-
7. Pig <i>sus scrofa</i> +	+	+	+
8. sheep <i>Ovis orientalis</i> +	-	+	+
9. Goat <i>Capra hircus</i> +	-	+	+
10. Nilgai <i>Boselaphus</i> - <i>tragocamelus</i>	+	+	+
11. Black buck <i>Antelope</i> - <i>cervicapra</i>	+	+	+
12. chinkara <i>Gazella</i> -	-	+	+

**LAGOMORPHA**

1. Hare *Lepus nigricollis* + - +

**RODENTIA**

1. Porcupine *Hystrix Indica* + - -

**II. Reptiles**

Lizard *Varanus sp.* + - -

**Case Study of Certain Animal Species not Reported in Historic Period**

In the Rockshelter paintings of Central India three categories of animal species which are not reported in the historical period have been desuited. In are cotegory animal species like rhinoceros may be incljuded, which is deficted in the seals of Harappan Age but then it is not reported from the central rock shelter zone area in In the second category 'extincl' species like that of extincl elephant' can be included. which lived in India in geological past and their fossils have been found' in different pants of India. In the third category animal like Girafe and the bird like ostarich may be included, which have never been reported in India.

**Rockshalter paintings of Rhinoceros**

Rhinoceros are found in africa south of sahara and in south East Asia. In India it is now found only in the north eastern stated, The rhinoceros paintings of Rock art are found in Africa from where it is still found in abundance, from Europe from where in had vanished long back and in India far away from the rockshalter zone.

Rhinoceros were very common even upto Holocene. They were not only widely distributed particulrluy in Eurasis but also belonged to many species. The fossils of rhinoceros species have been found from Europe to Kurnool(South India) where they were once abundant but had been wiped out during historical period.

The existence of rhinoceros in Indian mainland was confirmed in the rockshelters of Mirzapur district of U.P. In 1881 Cockburn had found fossilised rhinoceros boned in the valley of the Ken river in the Mirzapur

region as well as painting of a rhinoceros hunted by three men in a shelter near Ronp village. At that time Cockburn identified the animal as a boar, mainly because he thought the animal's horn a tusk planted on its snout. Soon afterwards he saw another paintings of rhinoceros hunt alongwith natural drawings of sambar in HarniHarna cave and drawings of boars in other caves nearby. After the discovery of these drawings Cockburn corrected his earlier erroneous identification of the rhinoceros.

In 1883 he found a well- preserved draring of a rhinoceros hunt in Ghormanagar shelter near Bijaygarh fort southeast from Robertsganj in Mirzapur district. Although fully aware that the spears in the paintings at Ghormangar appeared tipped with stone tools Cockburn refused to date the painting earlier than 300 years on the ground that the Mughal Emperor Babar had found rhinoceros common in that area in 1529. In 1899 Cockburn published an account of all his discoveries and he compared the drawings with those found in Australia, South Africa and South America (Cockburn, 1899:91).

we do not know exactly to which particular species the extinct rhino belonged. In fact most of rhino species had similar appearance, the only difference was either in the number of horns which was found on their snout. The size of ;the horn also differed greatly.

A comparison of remains of numerous extinct forms with those now living indicateds seven main lines of descent and evolution. For instance two species of rhinos inhabiting Africa are said to have diverged from each other and became distinct species a million years ago.

### Indian Rhino

Writing about the distribution of Indian rhinoceros respected wildlife expert E.P. Gee in the 'Wildlife of India' wrioted

*'The history of Indian rhino is also the story of the changing vegetation and climate of this subcontinent. Rhino existed during the Mohen jo daro era about 5000 hunted and killed many rhino on the frontier of kashmir in AD 1393. In the sixteenth century. There were rhino in parts of the west of the sub continent, and as far north west as peshawar' (p.177).*

The Great Indian one horned rhinoceros is the largest land mammal next to the elephant. It measures 300 to 315 Cm in the head and body length and about 180 cm in the shoulder height. Unlike African rhino its hide is hairless.

The river Gandak owes its name after this great animal. It is likely that the rhinoceros was particularly available throughout the course of this river of Eastern India, The Great Indian one horned rhinoceros is a denizen of the grass-jugles and prefers swampy ground. Its breeding ratye is very slow. The calf, usually a single is born aound october. paradoxically, the animal has been widely hunded for supposedly aphrodiatic properties.

### Rhinoceros Species painted in Indian Rockshelters

It is difficult to say which particular species of rhinoceros has been depicted in rockshelter paintings. But it is likely that it was India one horned rhino which roamed widely in Indian peninsula.

Upto the first quarter of this century 3 species of rhinos were found in India. But upto this time their range had been restricted in the North-East. These were :

#### 1. The Great Indian one horned Rhinoceros (Rhinoceros Unicornis)

This species was extensively distributed in the Gangetic plain. Today it is restricted to parts of Nepal, West Bengal and Assam.

#### 2. The Smaller one lorned or Javan Rhinoceros (Rhinoceros sondaicus)

In India it was found in Assam south of Brahmputra, It was mainly destributed in South East Asia upto Java.

#### 3. The Asiatic Two horned Rhinoceros (Didermocerus Sumatrensis)

In India two horned rhino or the Sumatran rhino was found in Tripura and parts of Assam. It was mainly found in south East Asian Countries.

All the 3 species of rhinos found in India have obscure geneological history. The remains of these species are found only on upper stratas of Siwaliks. The two forms are known as

#### 1. Rhinoceros sivalensis (Siwalik rhinoceros) and

## 2. Rhinoceros palaeindicus (Ancient rhinoceros of India)

### Identification of Rhino in Rockshelter paintings

Rhinoceros are easily identified by their horn and massive body with folded skin. Not all the characters are expected to be depicted by stone age artists.

All the living rhinos whether Indian or African are included in a single family Rhinocerotidae. Their massive build their short stumpy legs are some of the family characters. The skin in all the living forms in either thinly clad with hair or naked.

All the Indian species exhibit deep folds in hide. The horn is situated on the middle line of the snout. It is formed of a closely matted mass of horny fibre issuing from the skin. It has no connection with the skull. The horns grown throughout life and if lost are reproduced.

In Indian rockshelters there are two types of figures. Sometimes the animal is shown alone or amongst other herbivores then there are figures of rhino hunt as well.

Rhino horn has superstitious belief of aphrodisiac powers. It is not known whether prehistoric warriors in central India killed the animal for horn, for sport or for flesh.

More found within Indian limits. The small population of this species are confined to Borneo, Sumatra and Java.

In India it was found only upto the north eastern limits of the country.

Existing populations of Great Indian are horned Rhino.

The Species is restricted in the following protected areas of our country :

- |              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Gourmara  | 4. Kaziranga |
| 2. Jaladpara | 5. Lao khoa  |
| 3. Manas     | 6. Namdapha. |

The species is also found in the neighbouring countries of India.

Rhinoceros has been depicted in the rock art not only in India but also in Africa. The African rhinoceroses are put in two different genera. Africa has one horned rhino and also a two horned rhino. In a rock art of Africa a rhino is shown chasing its hunters.

### Rockshelter Paintings of Extinct Elephants

Evolution of elephants has been well studied because the palaeontologists could find large number of fossils of old forms. The other well studied animals similar to elephants are the horse and the camel. It is not necessary to give the details of the old forms which gave rise to new forms since Miocene period.

In India the fossil elephants were found in different deposits of the Siwalik mountains. The upper Siwalik deposits (from lower Pliocene) revealed a number of extinct proboscids.

Table 10.7 Extinct proboscids of upper Siwaliks

Proboscid	Upper Siwaliks 6000 + 9000 ft.	
	Era	Deposit
<i>Elephas maximus</i>	— Subrecent & Recent	— River alluvium
<i>Elephas primigenius</i>	— Mid to upper Pleistocene	— Plateau gravel
Mammoth		
<i>E. namadicus</i>	— Mid Pleistocene	— Bldr Congl. stage
<i>E. planifrons</i>	— Lower Pleistocene	— Bldr-Congl. stage
<i>E. hysudricus</i>	— Upper Pliocene	— Pinore stage
<i>E. ganesa</i>		
[Syn. <i>stegodon ganesa</i> ] —	Upper Pliocene	— Pinjore stage
	<i>E. insignis</i>	
(Syn. <i>Stegodon insignis</i> ) —	Upper Pliocene	— Pinjore stage
	<i>E. bombifrons</i>	

(Syn. <i>stegodon bombifrons</i> )	—	Mid Pliocene	—
			Pinjore stage
	E. Clifti		
(Syn. <i>Stegodon Clifti</i> )	—	Mid Pliocens	—
			Pinjore stag
<i>Mastodon sivalensis</i>	—	Mid Pliocene	—
			Tatrot stage
<i>Mastodon Cautleyi</i>	—	Lower Pliocene	—
			Tatrot stage

Indian scholars working on the Indian rockshelter paintings have identified some of the figures as belonging to the extinct species of elephant which in the geological past were distributed in India.

This interpretation seems to be influenced by the findings of cave paintings of elephant (Mammoth) in Europe.

It has to be remembered that no fossil remains of any extinct elephant species has been discovered by archaeologists in any of the rockshelters of Central India.

The very basis of identification of extinct species in the rockshelter paintings can hardly be termed as proper.

Before, some more details of the extinct species of Indian elephants may be given it will be pertinent to give brief introduction of the elephant drawings of European prehistoric Caves.

#### Elephant drawings of European Prehistoric caves

In the European caves when the paintings of elephants were discovered, the elephant species painted did not depict either the African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) found in tropical Africa South of Sahara or Indian elephant (*Elephas maximus*) found in Tropical Asia, in South East Asia and most the South East Asian Countries, The historical records of Europe reveal that the Ancient Greeks and Roman knew the elephant but then for about 1500 years or so Elephant was not known in Europe. In the late Medieval period only those Europeans who travelled either Africa or tropical Africa had seen an elephant. Such travellers often told the details of elephant to the European artist, who made grotesque pictures

of elephant as late as up to seventeenth Century.

Once the taxonomists examined the two elephants of Africa and Asia, both were found different animals physiologically and were put in two different genera. The two species of elephants belonging to two genera are in fact the last of the elephant species.

The elephant figures found in the European caves were nearer to Indian elephant but in the cave art the elephant was shown to have long curved tusks and a woolly coat, The physical characteristics not found in Indian elephant. Later on not only the skeletons of this elephant Howell (1970) writes :

'He (Cro-Magnon Man) has left impressive records of his skill behind him. In Piedmont, Czechoslovakia, there are skeletons of 1000 mammoths' (p.148) were recovered from the various excavations of Europe but even the part of the body of this animal was uncovered from the northern Tundras. The animal was popularly known as Mammoth.

It is really appreciable, that the in a most natural and lively style. The Palaeontologists and the archaeologists had no difficulty in identifying these figures as belonging to a species which was now extinct but which was very widely distributed in Palaearctic region.

Colbert (1969) writes :

*'The Pleistocene or the great Ice Age was the age of Mammoths (which is the name commonly to extinct elephants) on all continents except south America .....  
..... Man has lived with mammoths and elephants during the course of his evolutionary history. To the earliest men living in Eurasia and Africa giant mammoths have been truly fearsome beasts against which there was little protection, he also became a hunter of mammoths. Numerous discoveries in Europe show that stone age man pursued the mammoths, prevailing against. These giant beasts by the use of guile and well conceived strategy. Mammoths were frequently trapped in deep pits, where they could be stoned to death, or killed with heavy dead falls ... various species of*