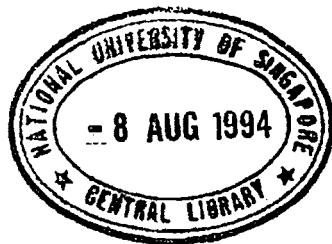


LINES ON STONE

The Prehistoric Rock Art of India

ERWIN NEUMAYER



MANOHAR
1993

Picture groups showing the hunting of animals are very common in the rock-art of the mesolithic period. Indeed hunting might be the single most depicted theme in the rock paintings of this period. From these pictures we learn about the tools and weapons used during that time, as well as strategies used during the hunt.

The hunt was carried out not only in small groups in which two or three men cooperated (Figs.: 40,45,48,87-8,121-6,131,136,240), but also in big hunting expeditions, comprising several dozens of beaters who moved forwards in files driving the game towards the strategically positioned archers (Figs.: 81,84,127-30, 137,239).

In these large organized hunting groups the narrative character of the Indian rock-art is seen at its best. A number of minor incidents are woven in these large hunting panels. These incidents are intimate glimpses of life long past. It is a source material, which is not available in any other archaeological material.

There is the scene where one of the hunters grabs a fleeing piglet by its hindlegs (Figs.:127-8), animals in their desperation turning against their hunters (Figs.: 49,132), a rhino dashing one of its attackers into the air (Fig.: 131).

The hunting groups also give fairly detailed descriptions of traps (Figs.: 105,136,138-41). Snares are arranged in a semicircle, into which a deer is driven (Fig.: 136), or frames of bamboo splinters(?) are fastened into the shrubbery to entangle the fleeing animals (Fig.: 138). Several mesolithic pictures also depict the trapping of animals in pitfalls (Figs.: 140-1).



Fig.:121: Lakhajoar

Fig.:122: Kathotia



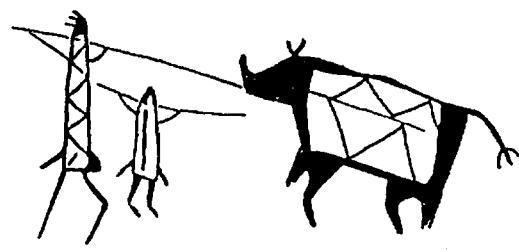


Fig.: 123: Robertsganj - Panchmukhi Romp

10 cm

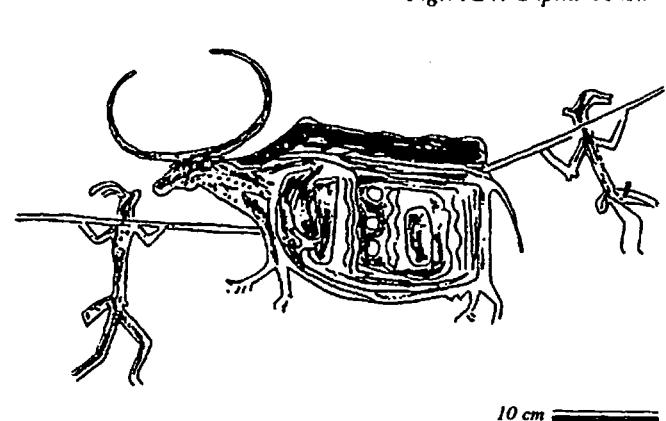


Fig.: 124: Gupha Masir

10 cm

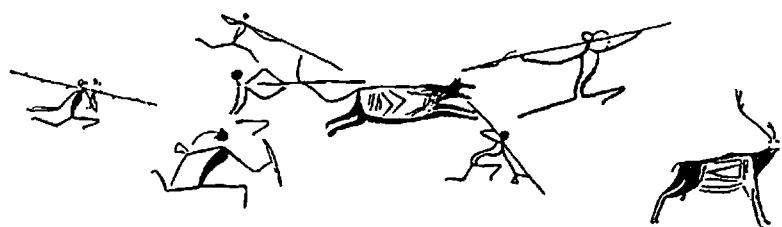


Fig.: 125: Kathotia

10 cm

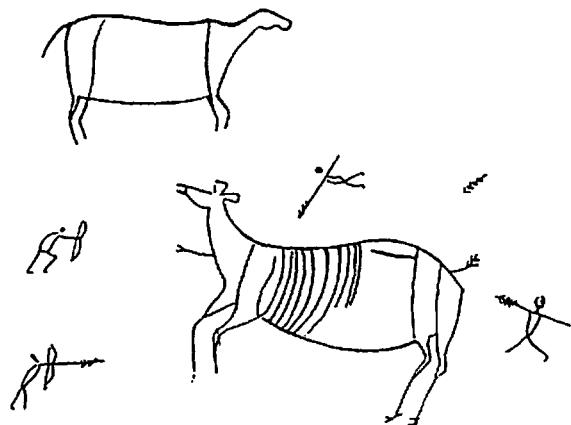


Fig.: 126: Kerwaghat

10 cm

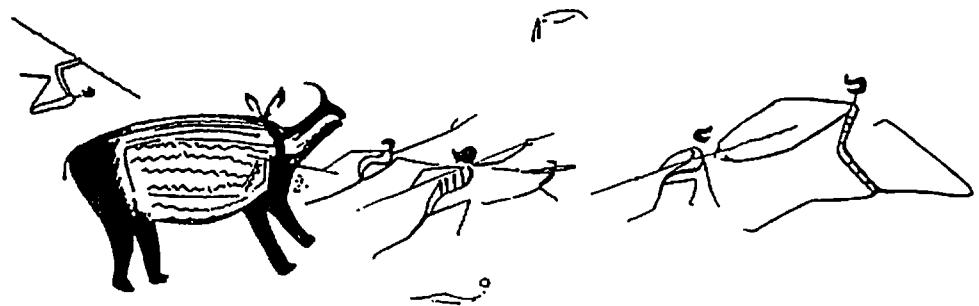
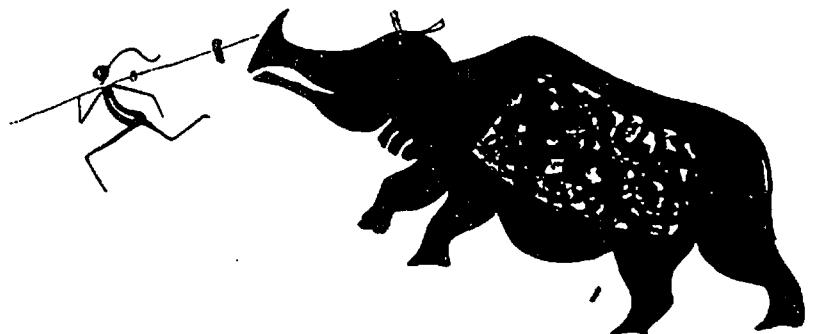


Fig.: 131: Bhimbetka

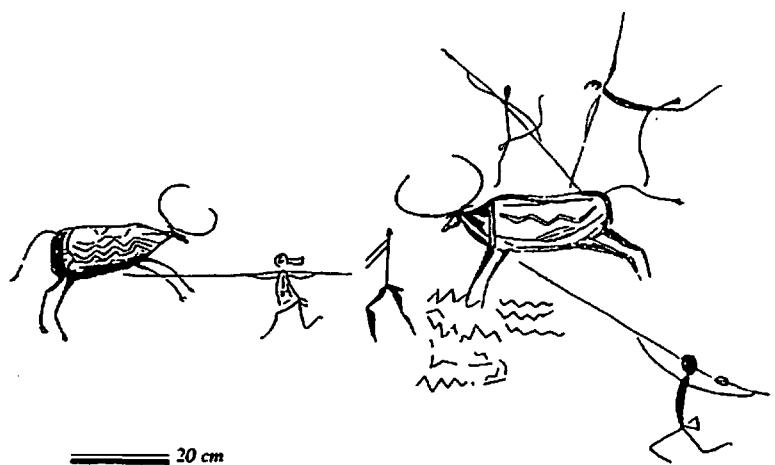
— 20 cm

Fig.: 132: Jaora

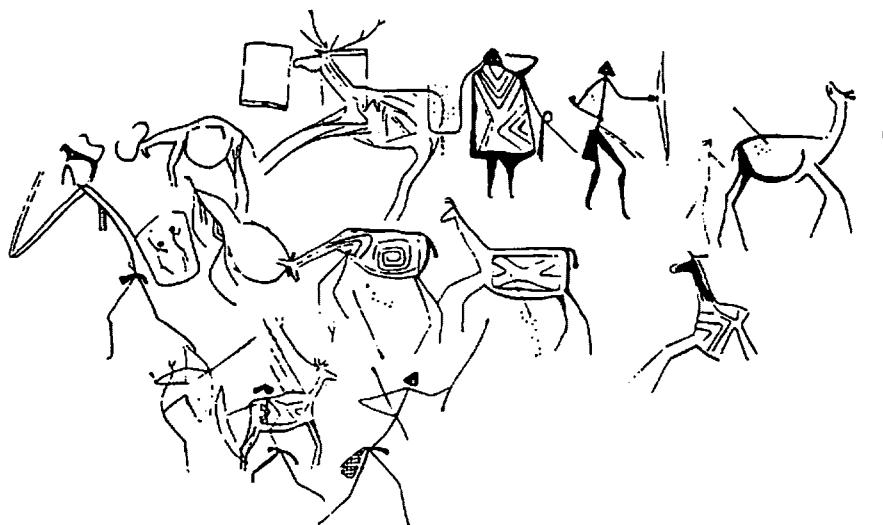


— 20 cm

Fig.: 133: Bhopal - Dharampuri

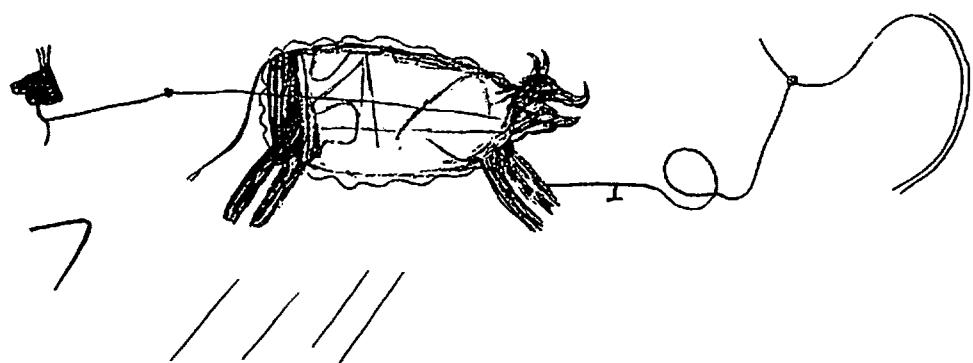


— 20 cm



— 20 cm —

Fig.: 138: Lakhajoar



— 20 cm —

Fig.: 139: Firengi

Big animals such as elephants and rhinos were hunted. As the pictures show, these hunts were at times dangerous undertakings and several times hunters are shown in precarious situations. One hunting scene in Bhimbetka shows several hunters attacking a rhino. One of the hunters is whirled into the air by the menacing horn of the animal (Fig.: 131). A painting from Chibbar Nulla shows a tiger mauling the arm of a hunter, whose companion tries to ward off the tiger with bow and arrow (Fig.: 49).

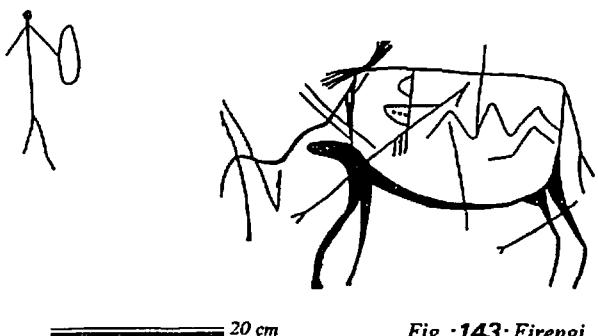


Fig.: 143: Firengi

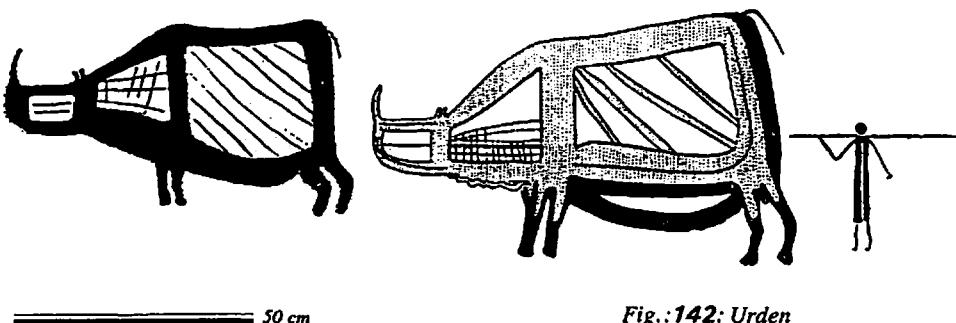


Fig.: 142: Urdan

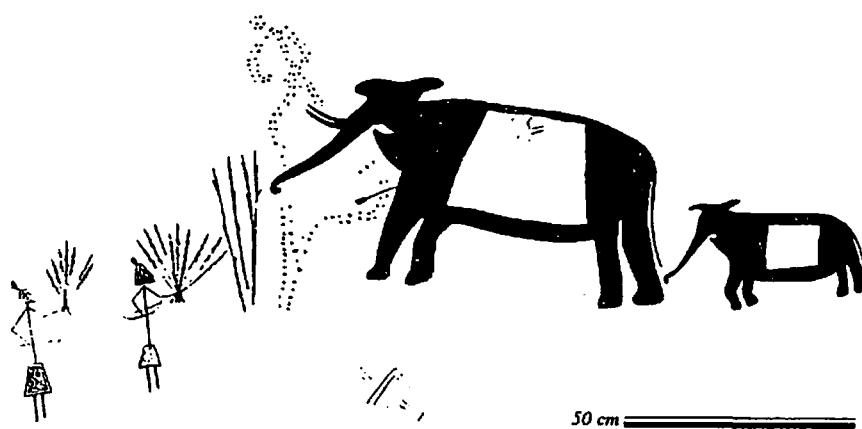


Fig.: 144: Jaora

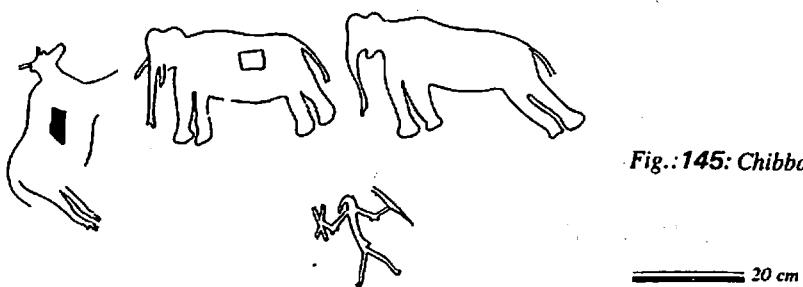


Fig.: 145: Chibbar Nulla

In the oldest stylistic painting groups, files of human figures, sometimes in strange postures are placed in large assemblies of disproportionately large animals (Figs.: 194-209).

A rather extensive picture group of long rows of humans, bent down to touch the heel of the man in front are known from Urden (Figs.: 194-7). This composition was found on the ceiling of a very low shelter and has only survived in sections. Originally the chain of human figures seem to have formed more or less a circle along the periphery of the ceiling. In close proximity to the human chain are animals, of which several display fantastic features. One animal, although having the body of a buffalo, sports deer-like antlers and an elephant's trunk and tusks, is depicted close to several stick figures, which similarly are crowned with antlers (Figs.: 194-5). Another interesting depiction is of a rhino with two horns over its snout (Figs.: 196-7).

The depiction of a bovine head without body (Fig.: 196) is reminiscent of a similar depiction of a detached head of a buffalo in a picture group from Kathothia (Neumayer, E., 1983:57), in which several people seem to dance around it.

Fig.: 194: Urden

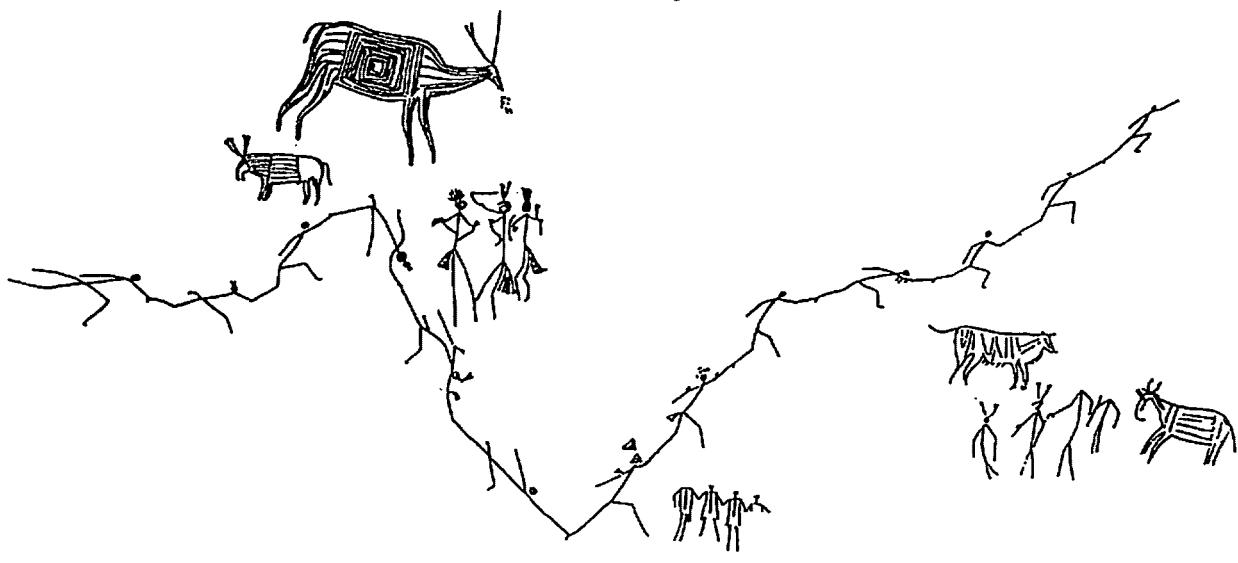


Fig.: 195 (from Fig.: 194): Urden



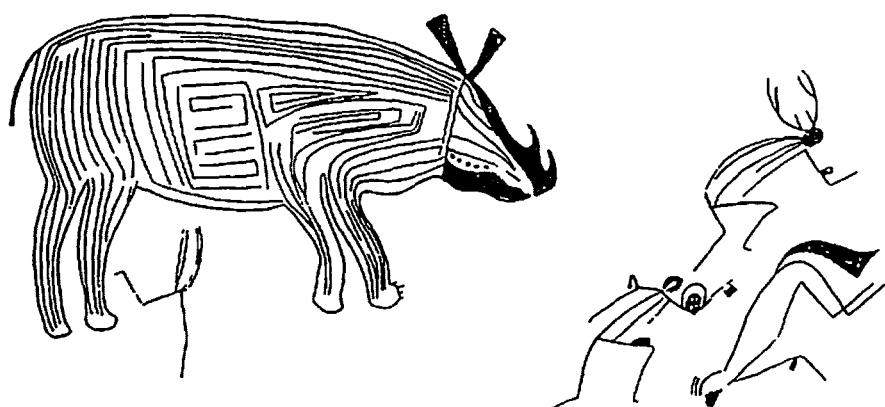


Fig.: 196: Urden

— 10 cm

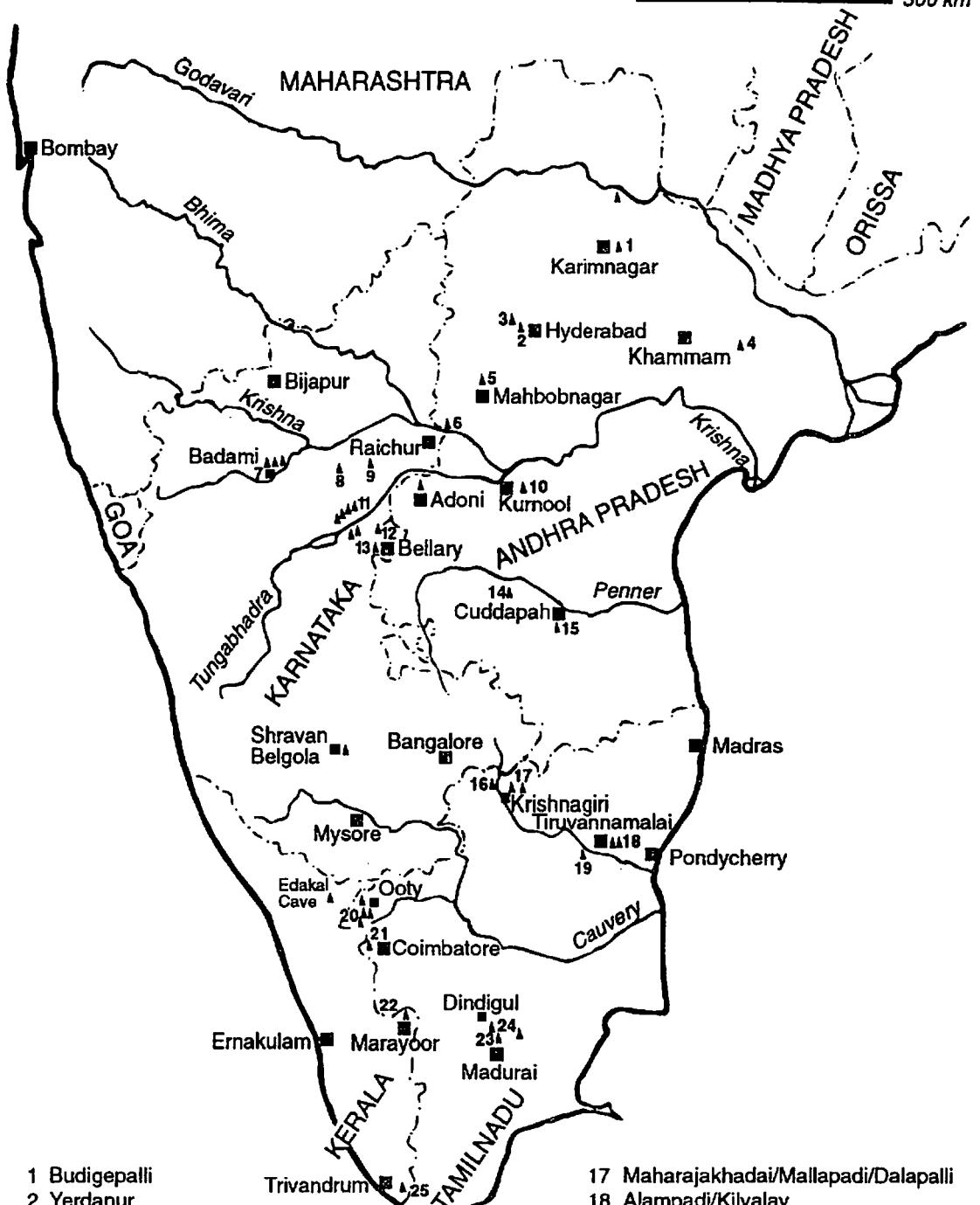
Fig.: 197 (from Fig.: 196): Urden

10 cm



MAP 6 Rock Art Sites of the Southern Deccan

300 km



1 Budigepalli
 2 Yerdanur
 3 Kokapet
 4 Bainete Banda
 5 Sanganupalli
 6 Mudumala
 7 Badami/Pattadkal/Aiholi
 8 Piklihal
 9 Maski
 10 Ketavaram
 11 Hampi/Benakal Forest
 12 Tekkalkota
 13 Bellary/Koppagallu
 14 Chintakunta
 15 Beddagaddi
 16 Birpalli
 17 Maharajakhadai/Mallapadi/Dalapalli
 18 Alampadi/Kilvalay
 19 Odyattur/Settavaray
 20 Padyandal
 21 Iduhatti/Velary Kombay
 22 Vettaikaranmalay
 23 Marayoor/Elutu Ala/Atala
 24 Madurai - Sundarajanpatti
 25 Sirumalay - Meenputti/Karungalakudi