



An Ethno-Archaeological Study of Traditional Painting art Production of Maharana Community in Middle Mahanadi Valley Region in Odisha

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ABSTRACT : Indian painting art has a long tradition which is evolved from the time of stone age, when the human being had dwelling in rock shelter, they had practiced the painting work on the wall of rock shelter by the using of locally available colorants raw materials. The evidences of Indian prehistoric rock art painting has found in Bhimvetka, Azamgarh, Pratapgarh, Mirzapur and Vikramkhol, rock shelter sites. Later on cultural tradition of painting flowed down with Vedic, Buddhist, and Hindu period in ancient time. In this phase mural painting are found in Ajanta and Ellora and miniature painting are found in various manuscripts for illustration. The painting tradition has grown as usual professional caste based system that occupationally specialized art production. This painting art creativity attached socio-economic cultural behavior of certain primitive community. In this paper I attempt to study such traditional painting art producer community is Maharana community in a rural base Subarnapur region in middle Mahanadi valley, an ethnoarchaeological perspective. This community has not only expertise in drawing and painting but also other art objects production including, curving, engraving, sculpturing, and erecting of temple is an occupational and artisanal tradition.

Keywords: Artisanal, expertise, occupation, rock-art, tradition, specialize.

I. Introduction:

The tradition of Odishan painting starting from unseen past to present day has occurred in certain changes; and it flowed down through various period like Vedic, Buddhist, and Hindu concept and practice. But this traditional art and crafts perform by village community has encounter during colonial rule in 19th century. The tradition of community based and village ethnic centered cultural art efficacy has declined. Odisha is the part and parcel of Indian culture, but in sphere of art development, Odisha has maintained on regional style. The orissan artisan in the field of art production, has expertise in stone curving, sculpting,



erecting of colossal building and painting. The ethnoarchaeological investigation by applying ethnographic method on living society is a matter of making model of culture pattern for interpretation. Prior to variable archaeological study on prehistoric human lives on basis of survived remains in different ecological sites is applying theory and method. Many scholars have taken striking effort to develop explicit procedure for analyzing the cognitive idea of tools making and artistic creativity of early society. Now much initiative has taken on the ethnographic study on primitive people and their activities to figure out the content of rudimentary socio-cultural pattern. The present initiative on ethnoarchaeological approach on contemporary living society who involved in art and craft production is prime observation on material culture.

This study of a particular artistic creativity of painting which attached life and society has a cultural background. The art creation any aspect, belief and custom of material objects have a social process. The beliefs, the customs and the material objects used in them are all interrelated.

The historical background of painting of Odisha is associated with socio-cultural life of peoples. The orissan traditional painting art is attached to Chitrakara Maharana community. The art of painting of Odisha latter on evolved in regional style and design. The Odishan art of painting has grow with three regional style as Puri, Ganjam and Subarnapur style in ancient and medieval time. Sitakant Mahapatra speak that the first two schools resembled each other aesthetically and even metrically. The Champamal School was somewhat different aesthetically and artistically. The art historian speak that the art of Champamal is resemblance with Indonesian art. One does not, however, know the precise channel through which orissan art travelled to Indonesia (java) those days [1]. The orissan painting is specialized and caste based occupational tradition. In the context of subsistence behaviour and economy of this community is production, and distribution pattern. They have engaged in the work of woods curving and image making of variable deities and toy for child, stone curving, painting, and erecting building like temple for fulfilling the basic necessity. Every society does instinctively works, as an occupational tradition. In their traditional works has system of learning process is matter of how they



develop cognitive ideas. The contemporary ethnic society and their socio-cultures behaviour originated right from the social formation. The traits of material culture and tradition always transformed generation to generation and reformed in culture. The tradition of material culture manifested certain characteristic of socio-economic behaviour which related to cognitive activities of prehistoric people.

The specialization and caste based occupation; the painting artistic creativity attached socio-economic cultural behavior of Maharana community. In this attempt to study such traditional painting art producer community is Maharana community in a rural base Subarnapur region in middle Mahanadi valley, an ethnoarchaeological perspective. They has not only expertise in drawing and painting but also other art objects production including, curving, engraving, sculpturing, and erecting of temple is an occupational and artisanal tradition. The traditional activities of ethnic cultural setting of primitive peoples are more valuable that can find out relevant information by ethnographic study. We know that some scholar has worked on paintings for documenting and analysis different aspects and characteristic of painting. The traditional archaeological reconstruction on painting which is based on chronological assessment varied theme of prehistoric culture. But recent ethnoarchaeological theory reconstruct scientific manner that assumed complete picturesque ancient people and culture. The ethnographic study is concerned system of painting production in this area. This community is occupationally engaged in their works of Ganjpa cards, Mural painting on wall, Patta painting, wooden toy making and painting on it, painting of Jagannath deity in every year, and servicing to lekha (painting) of deity in Usakothi has found different part in Odisha. The artisans of Maharana or Chitrakara community still engaged in Raghurajpur and Subarnapur in Odisha. The game of Ganjpa cards is still alive basically as a art product. Now it is an antiquity of archaeological conception. How to Ganjpa cards are made and how the figures are drawn on them. From the earliest time, the ancestors has been created and manufactured the cards are equally interesting to know. The previous work has done on Ganjpa card production by Mahapatra, and Agrawal. and as a art objects but the socio- cultural relationship with artisan and their preparation process is more than the game culture itself.

PAST AND PRESENT



In 20th century, rediscovery of Indian past cultural tradition of art by Oriental scholar as well as Indian had revived the painting culture for reconstructed past historical evolution. The rock painting is earliest colorful art work of prehistoric human being that found in paleo-mesolithic context. The evidence of rock painting extended from Paleolithic to Mesolithic period has found in several rock shelter sites of India are Bhimvetka, Azamgarh, Pratapgarh, Mirzapur and Vikramkhol. These rock art sites are provided testimonial evidences of art practice of prehistoric people. These rock art paintings has provided socio-ecological scenario of hunting food-gathering, fishing and other human activities likes sexual union, child birth etc. According to archaeological analysis, painting practice had started by Paleo-Mesolithic peoples on the wall of rock shelter and emerged latter on domestic decorative purposes in the Neolithic revolution. The settled man primarily mud-thatched house, then applied of painting art medium into plastered mud wall and domestic objects like ceramics, terracotta, and wooden plaques that no longer survived. The artisanal specialization activity of Chalcolithic peoples had evolved in the high in zenith. The Chalcolithic peoples were expert different stream of work like glossy pottery making with painting, metal work, ivory curving etc. The Indus valley civilization has yielded evidence of much artistic activity including painted and engraved pottery beads jewellery, brassware, statuettes, and seal and depicting human figure. From the Later Vedic period painting art works, is undertaken by organizing way and linear caste based occupational continuity.

In the Odisha context, the recent discovery work of prehistoric painting by Pradhan² has lime lighted cognitive ideology of prehistoric peoples. Some early hiatoric painting found in cave of khandagiri and udayagiri in Jaina tradition dated 1st century BC. aco The budhhist mural painting at sitavinji in Kendujhar district.

The interpretation of prehistoric painting is harder task. Many scholars has not only taken vigor initiative for discovering rock art in remote rock shelter but also utilized scientific logic, theory and method on archaeological evidences of art remains of painting and engraving for reconstructing colorful cultural pattern of prehistoric people. In the context of history art of painting, India is rich in their heritage. The painting art evolved right from Paleolithic age to medieval history



has changed from time to time going toward greater complexity in modern age. The painting heritage of India has categorized into four types of paintings as rock painting, mural painting, patta painting, and miniature painting. In the orissan context, the painting heritage has evolved from prehistoric period to present day can be divided in chronologically into four phase as rock art painting, mural painting, patta painting, and miniature painting. In the regional style of painting art of middle Mahanadi valley we found certain cognitive ideas of artisans' involvement in the techno-style and decorative pattern. The history of orissan painting and social involvement from prehistoric period to medieval period has evolved certain ideology. The rural primitive village culture is a sign of simple socio-cultural behavior to highlight basic component of ethnoarchaeological interpretation. The certain activity and tradition of primitive human society are intangible part of culture which derived in past and continued till now.

II. Objectives of the Study:

This ethnoarchaeological study is carried out on traditional painting techniques in middle Mahanadi valley. This archaeological research is reconstructed on the basis of ethnography evidence. The study is designed on exploratory. The objectives of the study are;

- To identify traditional techniques and style of painting production.
- To examine the scale and theme of painting production, assemblages in settlements of differing size, and to evaluate patterns of painting work and engagement in the sociological context that link with painter and clients.
- To find out socio-economic behaviors of Maharana community in middle Mahanadi valley.
- To establish a historical linkage through the production on the basis of evidences.

III. Methodology:

This ethno-archaeological field study using ethnographic techniques to collect relevant data on painting produced community and livelihood which attached in sampled painting art production centers of variable village settlement.



This ethnographic survey is based on method of collecting and recording variable data by mean of interview, personal observation and photographic documentation. The ethnographic data are evaluating in the model of precedent cultural interaction. The system of painting production can be defined according to involvement of artisan, their institution and workshop pattern. The approach of social involvement can be described based on arrangement of operational pattern, tools and technology. Our studies have focused on patterning of painting produced by Chitrakara artisan concentrated village settlement. The painting production system which linked socio-economic and cultural tradition is starts from unseen remote past. The techniques of the field survey imply ethnographic sampling strategy on Chitrakara settlement in middle Mahanadi valley. The intensive level of survey is selected sample villages where ethnic Chitrakara are sedentarily habitat and produced paintings. The sampling strategy of this survey is based on collection of ethnographic data on various canthers of village settlements. The ethnic group of Maharana community is settled with other communities of village. The ethnic group may be defining a firm aggregate of people settled in the region. They are possessing common feature relatively staple peculiarities of language and culture that recognized their unity. Ethnographic survey is the integral part of ethno-archaeological studies for yielding relevant ethnographic data of contemporary socio-cultural pattern people to generate model for investigate of substantial cultural behaviour of prehistoric people. Ethno-archaeologist always reconstructs theory and prediction archaeological point of view for study prehistoric human being cultural behaviour. The village culture provided general attributes of population, settlement pattern and environment as a whole cultural system. The village also provided attributes of subsystem of culture like subsistence pattern, crafts, metallurgy, social system, trade and communication. The ecology of village culture applying into culture system theory, production system is the part of subsystem of village culture. The middle Mahanadi valley has been chosen for the present study for above reason as well as the existence a large concentration of Maharani's community' habitats in village settlements. . An attempt has been made to fill up this gap with the existing painting traditions that have remained confined to the isolated pockets of rural communities and in the stage of vanishing. During the course of our

research work a detailed documentation on the following aspects of the Maharana community of the proposed area will be made;

- 1) socio-economic aspects of the Chitrakara and their settlement patterns,
- 2) Painting process,
- 3) Style of painting and
- 4) Economy of reciprocal social systems.

IV.Study Area :

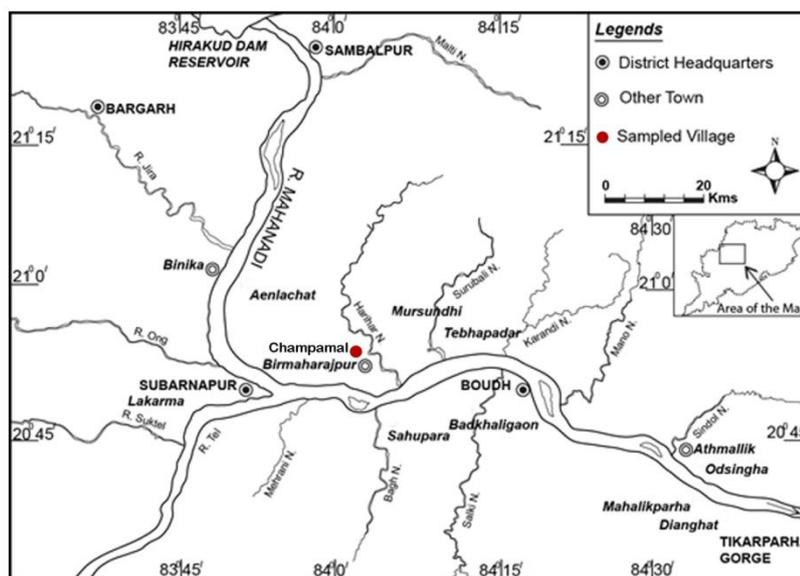


Figure: 1- map showing location of sampled village

The land of the middle Mahanadi valley region is geographically and culturally most potent zone of prehistoric culture and assimilated with tribal and non-tribal society. Rock painting of Odisha is earliest form of art of prehistoric peoples. This rock painting art are found maximum number in middle Mahanadi valley.

The middle Mahanadi valley is the place of very old culture of prehistoric peoples have left habitational remains and painting in rock shelter. This valley region have also large number of settlement sites from Neolithic to Early Historic are Hikudi[3], Khameswaripali[4], Bhejidihi[5], Kumrdihi[6], Kumarsingha[7], kurumpadar[8], Badmal[9], Manamunda[10]; Narla Asurgarh etc have excavated,



explored prehistoric cultural remains in variable stratigraphic levels. All reporting sites are provided large archaeological information of prehistoric cultural remains in variable cultural periods from Paleo-Mesolithic to early historic period. In the study of scientific endeavor, the material culture of prehistoric painting on rock shelter and Chalcolithic-white painted glossy slipped ware are appreciated as archaeological evidences. No doubt these study reflected painting art but there are not been ethno-archaeologically studied on painting producing artisan Maharana community, their livelihood and social organization in middle Mahanadi valley region. The ethnic Chitrakara are how to produce, and distribute painting objects in regional scale is an important matter for analysis on indigenous production pattern. The material culture of archaeological painting founded in variable sites is matter of regional produced artifacts or imported. Ethnography as tool of ethnoarchaeology for enquiring and explaining archaeological problem that the certain studies have direct analogical interpretation on archaeological data that can lead to distorted picture. But the reconstruction of paradigm of cultural pattern assumed to better understanding and interpretation of past culture. According Gould and Watson, ethno archaeology is ‘A major premise of archaeological research is that what is known about the past, in term of both human behaviour and the operation of cultural system, is achieved by analogy

Some ethnoarchaeological researches have been undertaken in different part of India by archaeologists and anthropologists to describe and explain the construction and development of painting production system among them the work of Pradhan has done valuable work rock art with soura and juang painting ethnoarchaeological approach in western Odisha.

An understanding of ancient productive arrangements and socio-economic behaviour of traditional painter community is important because the relations of production are among the most fundamental points of integration between members of a society, between societies, and between societies and the environment. I have sampled Champamal (Fig.1) village in Birmaharajpr tahasil in subarnapur district. The painter engage villager’s want and sharing cultural system constitute a mechanism of socio-economic process of livelihood of



Maharana community. The existing system of painting production and circulation linked with sociological reciprocity and Maharana economy.

V. Result and Discussion :

(A) ARTISANAL BACKGROUND

The traditional art of painting has done by Maharana community in orissan is call Chitrakara Maharana. From the formation of craft specialization and caste division, painting practice is occurred according to social norm. This community has engaged in the profession is art and craft production. They are depended on this occupation as their subsistence economy. We observed the ancient monument evolved from early historic phase to medieval period, this community play active role as architect. This Maharana also are doing the job of painting work but no longer practiced fully fledged because traditional market has no longer alive. In the ethnographic survey has found those major households are altered job because traditional market is captured by modern.

(B) TRADITION OF PAINTING PRODUCTION

This community is employed to paint the deities of lord Jagannath before car festival, painted the wall of temple and kothi ghara, making wooden toy and painted on it and production of Ganjpa card. The Hindu household are invite the jajmani painter to paint their kothi ghara. The Maharana artisan are making toy horse, elephant, bull and various birds form like peacock, swain etc and painting on it. The village artisans have lives with other communities in co-operatively. Their lifestyle is as usual in village settlement. These artisans are engaged in their workshop and work in various program of painting work according to season of work.

(C) ECONOMY AND SUBSISTENCE

The Chitrakara are artisan community linked with age old tradition of painting production. This traditional painting producing community has been identified with the *Maharana*, are an artisan class of people has engaged from origin as their hereditary occupation. This community has large concentration and sedentarily habitation in the middle Mahanadi valley region from unknown



past. The community is ethnic origin and evolved with long standing occupational specialization. The long established traditional practice of village culture is an influential source that reflects indigenous culture and socio-economic background. The painting practice is inherited legitimacy of Maharana community. The painting production in village culture is very old tradition of nonindustrial people continuing process of cultural belief and practice which is still alive in the middle Mahanadi valley. This adaptation occupation of painting making job is accepted by *Maharana* community for fulfilling food, clothing, and shelter in long standing way. The painting production, toy making and mansion work are decidedly full-time specialists able to live even in large part of the earnings from their production. The Maharana society of the middle Mahanadi valley is skilled workmanship that they must meet the small scale industrial production as well as agricultural and domestic responsibilities. Most of the Chitrakara family comprised of 2 to 10 members. Painting work is done in main subsistence activity. In order to obtain Painting activities provided a major cash for such things as household necessities (e.g. rice, dal and vegetable), for livelihood. There are specialized workshop facilities. Painting is carried out in the homestead as part of the daily routine of domestic activities. Painting is produced all year, but considerably less of it is made during periods of peak agricultural activity (planting, weeding, and harvesting) and during the rainy seasons.

(D) SOCIO-RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

The Maharana community followed variable type of rituals, customs, and religions according to socio-religious practice of Hindu society. This community is living within a village settlement eco-environmental area. They followed common cultural legacy of occupation, language and religion. The painting is motivated by utilitarian and ritualistic features and sometimes by recreational impulses. The Maharana community are organized own selves in community life. They perform various festivals according to Hindu norm. They are worshipped their god Visvakarma (architect of world) in the month of Aswin. In their worshiping of lord Visvakarma, they followed festive function in every house in this community. This community has followed their social role in handing down social norms, moral laws, religious knowledge and wisdom, and in keeping the social structure stable. The form of social practice is inherited generation to



generation in their culture law. The traditional painting is dominated and shaped by religious motifs, the relation between this art and religion is a universal feature. It is an integral part of living. In their societies, there is no real distinction between Art and Life. These traditional arts, beliefs, rites and rituals, myths, rural handicrafts etc. are factors that enrich our cultural tradition. Their school learning is their home and art practice knowledge transmitted by oral tradition rather than written branches of knowledge.

(E) SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The family is the primary social institution of Maharana society which meets their primary and secondary needs by production of craft materials. The occupational purpose of maharana community is to satisfy specific needs for instance, needs for food, clothing, and shelter are met by economic activities made up of the organized work force. The functional labors of Maharana have exploited materials like woods stone and colorant are procured from natural environment. They manufacture toy, cards for Ganjpa, cloth lining for painting. The economic institution also distributes these goods and services to consumers. The painting producing skill and knowledge concerning how to carry out the production system is a teaching and learning process. The head man of the family drive the functions activities and thereby fulfill the basic needs. The nature of the Maharana economy has to do with production of toy and painting, distribution of finished goods and services to consumer. The Maharana economy is signified on variable finished items of wood curved toy and deities and stone curved sculpture. The finished products are distributional aspects of the economy that interpreted by this institution. The crafts are distributed by mean transport on roads and by waterways. The economic produce is reflected by subsistence activity of Maharana community. The Maharana community of Orissa is *Odia* speaking people divided into two groups *Odia* and Jhadua. There are certain distinctions among them that *Odia* Maharana are high in their cultural attitude and Jhadua are lower. They live in endogamous extended family homesteads dispersed over the landscape, each married man within a homestead occupying a separate house.



(F)PROCESS OF PAINTING PRODUCTION

The artisan of Maharana community followed certain process to medium of painting. Basically painting producer are prepared supporting objects where they paint are cloth, paper, and wood plaques etc. The artisans are basically produced cloth by applying sizing material and glue. The sizing materials are procured locally available Calcium Oxide stone and Tentuli manda. After ready the support medium they sketch the drawing of figurative icon or design in it. Then they apply colours on the drawing. The artisans are procured pigments from natural environment as well in market. The red colour is procured from Hingula, the yellow is from Haritala and blue is blue stone. The green is prepared with the mixture of blue and yellow. The grey is procured from hematite. Black is produced from coconout shell charcoal. The white is produced from conch-shell. The theme of the painting of artisan in this area was based on various myth of Puranic story. The story of Ramayan Mahabharata and Jagannatha are prime subject of painting. Various love stories are painted in miniature painting of manuscript like Nala Damayanti, Vaidehisha Bilasha, and Gitagobinda. The painting of this region is separated style and design of the Orissa painting. The Subarnapur style of painting reflected on iconic and figurative big nose style etc.

VI.Conclusion:

This ethnographical study traditional painting production by Chitrakara Maharana community in the middle Mahanadi valley provided variable data pertaining of painting art creativity. The Ethnoarchaeological analysis, the social organization of traditional painting production culture in the middle Mahanadi valley is cleared that the *Maharana* community followed specialized painting art production from remote past. The ethnographic field work on sample villages of painting production centers of the middle Mahanadi valley areas to investigate socio-cultural behaviour of traditional system of painting production, their settlement pattern, subsistence activities, social organization, specialized work, standard of work, scale of traditional painting production, mode of production are valuable phenomena of cultural system of recording for archaeological interpretation. The subsistence pattern of Maharana community is depended on art crafts production and exchanged goods or service by jajmani system. The reciprocity between artisan and consumer is revolved around rice cultivation and domestication of sheep, goat, cattle and buffalo. The long established traditional



practice of village culture is an influential source that reflects indigenous culture and socio-economic background. The art and craft production practice is inherited legitimacy of maharana community.

The art and crafts production in village culture is very old tradition of nonindustrial people continuing process of cultural belief and practice which is still alive in the middle Mahanadi valley. This simple socio economic creativity of art and craft making is now stage of decline. The role of Maharana community in ancient time was more valuable one. The rich cultural background of the middle Mahanadi valley region is related to archaeological evidences of art and craft production system in the past. The community is originated with the occupational specialization during caste formation from early age. The literary evidences of caste formation are based on occupational specialization in Vedic culture. The occurrences of occupational distinction among the Indian society are prime concept of social complexity. However the regional variability of habitation of Maharana community in eco-environment is subjected for livelihood. The production of variable painting and art artifacts, like making of wood and stone curving in traditional techniques which alive in central Mahanadi in Orissa , so it is profitable to pursue ethno-archaeological studies not only in technological aspects but also from the socio-cultural and commercial point of view. This research could cite the long term study on art and crafts production system on remote villages in Mahanadi valley for tracing back of archaeological evidences.

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