



RASI - IFRAO NEWS

The Nineteenth Congress of the Rock Art Society of India, Pondicherry, 2014: A Report

The nineteenth Congress of the Rock Art Society of India (RASI), jointly organized by the Archaeological Survey of India and the Department of History, Pondicherry University, was held at Convention Centre and Guest House, Pondicherry University during 4-6 December 2014. The Congress



Figure 1. Inauguration of the 19th RASI Congress by Lighting of the Lamp .

also marked the occasion of the Silver Jubilee year of the establishment of the Rock Art Society of India. The main theme of the 19th RASI Congress was "Forms, styles and compositions in Indian rock art". Besides, there was a panel discussion on, "The way ahead: Developing Indian and Chinese leadership in Rock Art research" and an Open Session. The Congress was attended by more than 80 delegates from 11 states of the country and from China and France. The inaugural function of the Congress was held in the morning on 4th December 2015. It began with the Pondicherry University anthem,

followed by lighting of a lamp by the dignitaries (Fig.1). Prof. Tang Huisheng (Department Archaeology, Hebei Normal University, Peoples Republic of China), Prof. R.C. Agrawal (President, RASI), Prof. Giriraj Kumar (Secretary General, RASI), Prof. V.H. Sonawane, (Former Head, M.S. University, Vadodara), Prof. V. Indumati (Director (i/c) SEI & RR, Pondicherry University), Prof. G. Chandrika (Head, Department of History, Pondicherry University), Prof. Venkata Raghotham, (Department of History, Pondicherry University) and Dr. N. Chandramouli, Organising Secretary RASI Congress 2014 were on the dais.

Prof. G. Chandrika welcomed the delegates. Prof. R.C. Agrawal and Prof. Giriraj Kumar delivered the Presidential and Secretary General's address respectively on behalf of RASI. Volume 24 of *Purakala* (2014), the Journal of Rock Art Society of India and a book entitled Religion and Society in Peninsular India edited by Dr. N. Chandramouli were released in the



Figure 2. Release of *Purakala* Vol.24 by the dignitaries at the Inaugural Function (From left to right-Prof. N. Chandramouli, Prof. Giriraj Kumar, Prof. (Mrs.) Chnadrika, Prof. R.C. Agrawal, Prof. V.H. Sonawane, Prof. Tang Huisheng, Dr. M. Nambirajan, Prof. Venkata Raghotham and Prof. (Mrs) V. Indumati)



Figure 3. Dr. K. Lourdasamy, SA, ASI, Chennai Circle and the Guest of Honour of the Conference addressing the audience

inaugural function (Fig. 2). The Silver Jubilee logo of Rock Art Society of India designed by Dr. Bithin Thakur, Guest faculty, Department of History, Pondichery University was launched by Prof. V. Indumati in the absence of Prof. (Mrs). Chandra Krishnamurthy, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of the University. Dr. K. Lourdasamy, Superintending



Figure 4. Dr. M. Nambirajan delivering Dr. V. S. Wakankar Memorial Lecture of the 19th RASI Congress.

Archaeologist, Archaeological Survey of India, Chennai Circle was the Guest of Honour also spoke on the occasion (Fig. 3). Prof. V.Indumati delivered presidential address of the function. Dr. N. Chandramouli proposed the vote of thanks .

After the inaugural function, the Academic Session-I was chaired by Prof. K. Rajan in which Dr. M. Nambirajan, Director (Monuments), Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi delivered the prestigious Wakankar Memorial Lecture on "Rock Art of South India: The Challenges ahead" (Fig. 4). Prof. R.C. Agrawal spoke about late Dr (Padmasri) V.S. Wakankar and Dr. Chandramouli introduced Dr. M. Nambirajan. Keynote address of the 19th RASI Congress was delivered by Prof. Huisheng Tang on "Direct Dating of rock art in China" (Fig. 5). Prof Tang was introduced by Dr. N.Chandramouli. The silver jubilee lecture on the development of rock art research in India was delivered by Prof. V.H. Sonawane . The subsequent academic sessions were attended by a host of scholars, enthusiasts and students who also participated in the academic deliberations of the RASI congress (Fig. 6). Panel discussion on, "The way Ahead: Developing Indian and Chinese leadership in rock Art science" was chaired by Prof. Giriraj Kumar, Prof. Huisheng Tang and Dr. N.Chandramouli. The panelists were Prof. S. Pradhan, Dr. Shanti Pappu, Prof.



Figure 5. Prof. Tang Huisheng delivering the Keynote address of the Congress.



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Figure 6. The participants enjoying the deliberations of the Congress.

K. Rajan, Dr. M. Nambirajan, Prof. R.C. Agrawal, Prof. Tang, Prof. Kumar and Dr. N.Chandramouli. The panel discussion generated a healthy debate over the topic (Fig. 7).

In the evening of 4th December 2014, a cultural programme in the form of "Theyyam Dance Concert" was organized in the Convention Centre. The programme was organized by Kakatiya Heritage Trust, Telengana, Kerala Folklore Academy, Kannur, Kerala and Department of History, Pondicherry



Figure 7. Prof. Tang Huisheng interacting with the delegates during the panel discussion session on Scientific Study of Rock Art.

University and Archaeological Survey of India. The delegates enjoyed the performance.

Thirty six research papers were presented in different academic sessions. The sessions were chaired by Prof K. Rajan, Dr. Ajit Kumar, Prof. Sadashiba Pradhan, Dr. Shanti Pappu. The rapporteurs of the sessions were Dr. Kanti Kumar Pawar, Dr. Prabash Sahu, Dr. Rajesh Meher and Dr. Kumar Akhilesh respectively.

The papers were followed by academic discussions. This year, the paper presentations by the young scholars have outnumbered that of the senior scholars.

The RASI Executive Committee Meeting was held in the evening on 4th December, 2014 which was presided by Prof R.C. Agrawal, President, RASI. The General Elections of RASI Executive Committee were held in the General Body meeting of the Rock Art Society of India in the evening on 5th Dec, 2015. It was unanimously decided that the existing RASI Executive Committee should continue for the next term of three years. It was also proposed in the meeting that the possibility of holding the next RASI congress should be explored at Nagpur University or any other place.

The Archaeological Survey of India, Chennai Circle had organized a



Figure 8. Dignitaries on the dais in the Valedictory function of the conference.

week - long photo exhibition coinciding the Silver Jubilee RASI Congress. It was entitled, "Rock art sites and monumental art of Tamilnadu", at seminar hall of the School of Social Sciences, Silver Jubille campus, Pondicherry University. The exhibition opened from 1st Dec, 2014, portrayed the rock art sites of Tamilnadu and Kerala, important excavated Neolithic and Megalithic and historical sites in south India. The delegates of the RASI congress visited the exhibition on 5th December, 2014 evening. Students from the sister organizations of Pondicherry University and several other schools and colleges visited the photo - exhibition and appreciated its contents.

The valedictory function of the congress was held on 6th December 2014. Dr. N. Chandramouli, Dr. K.P. Mohan Das (ASI, Chennai Circle), Prof. Tang Huiheng, Prof. R.C. Agrawal, Prof. V.V. Sonawane and Prof Venkata Raghotham were on the dais (Fig. 8). In the valedictory function, the rappoteurs of various sessions presented their reports on the papers read in

respective sessions. A DVD of the Documentary on "In search of the land of Pi" produced by the Centre for Electronic Media and Mass Communication, Pondicherry University (Research, Script and Narration by Prof. Venkata Raghotham) was released and viewed on the occasion. Prof. Tang, Prof. Sonawane, Dr. K.P. Mohan Das, Mr. Arjuna R. expressed their views, in the form of delegate feedback, about the 19th RASI Congress. The delegates were overwhelmed by the excellent arrangements of lodging, boarding and transportation made by the organizer of the congress under the able leadership of Dr. N. Chandramouli, Organising Secretary of the Congress. It was announced on the occasion that the publication of the Proceedings of the Congress will be brought out edited by Dr. N. Chandramouli and all the paper presenters were requested to send their paper in time. Mementos with silver jubilee logo of RASI were distributed to the delegates. On behalf of the RASI and all the delegates, Prof. R.C. Agrawal thanked the hosts for nice and affectionate organization of 19th RASI congress very efficiently and making it a memorable event. He also thanked the delegates, especially the young ones, for their active participation in the Congress and academic debates, thus contributing towards the grand success of the Congress.

Dr Arakhita Pradhan
Joint Secretary, RASI

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