humanity, but it now seems that it was in southern Asia where complex human culture first appeared.

The EIP Project has also provided the first scientific datings of Indian rock art, secured from some of the many other sites so far investigated in various parts of India. These were found to be very much younger. Sedimentary analyses, replication studies, dating work and the analyses of the excavated lithics are among the ongoing activities of the project, as well as the production of documentary films and scientific publishing of results.

Presented to the International IFRAO Congress *Pleistocene Art of the World*, Tarascon / Foix, France, 6-11 September 2010.

Members of the EIP team at the entrance of Daraki-Chattan Cave.

International Federation of Rock Art Organisations

IFRAO

RASI

AURA

The EIP Project is a collaboration of the Rock Art Society of India (RASI) and the Australian Rock Art Research Association Inc. (AURA), under the aegis of the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations (IFRAO) and with the support of several agencies, including the Archaeological Survey of India, the Indian Council of Historical Research and the Australia-India Council in Canberra. The joint directors of the EIP Project are Professor Giriraj Kumar (Indian Director) and Robert G. Bednarik (Australian Director):

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http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/eip1/web/index.html

Dating work at Moda Bhata open site.

EIP Project

The Early Indian Petroglyphs Project

Exploring the oldest known evidence of symbol use in the world: how did we become human?

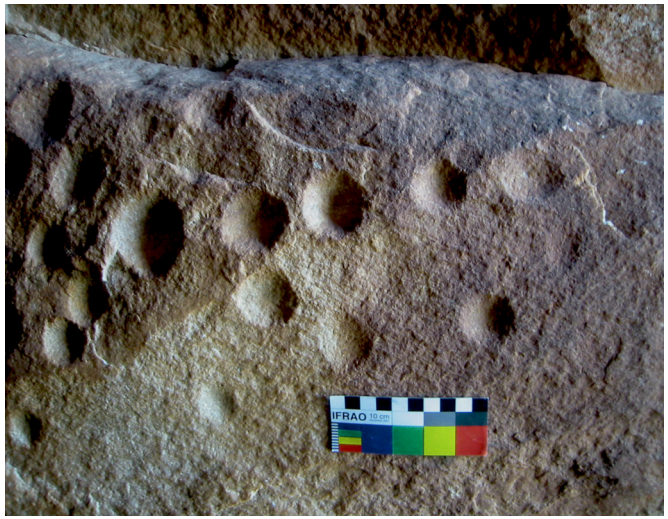
An adventure of science

How did the cognitive abilities of humans, without which our ascent to become the planet's dominant species would never have been possible, first manifest themselves permanently? Where did this process of becoming cognitively modern humans begin, and what forms of evidence for it have been found?

The primary rationale of the Early Indian Petroglyphs Project is to investigate claims of the occurrence of Lower Palaeolithic petroglyphs in central regions of India. Other purposes of this multi-facetted and multi-disciplinary research project are to provide new data for the chronology of the Middle and Late Pleistocene hominin history of

India and to investigate India's Lower Palaeolithic stone tool industries. This project, a collaboration of Indian and Australian researchers, was commenced in 2001. It involves archaeological excavations, a range of analytical studies, replication work and intensive field surveys, and it will continue for several more years. Since its findings are of considerable significance to the understanding of the cognitive evolution of humans, it would not be appropriate to defer the publication of all details until after its completion. Preliminary scientific reports have appeared and although there remain important questions to be resolved, the following has been well established.

The EIP Project has demonstrated the presence of Lower Palaeolithic petroglyphs in two quartzite caves in central India, and is engaged in determining the existence of further occurrences of this kind. In Auditorium Cave, at the World Heritage-listed Bhimbetka rock art complex, ten cupules and a linear petroglyph predate the late Acheulian and are very likely of an older, Oldowan-like chopping-tool tradition. In Daraki-Chattan Cave, re-discovered by R. Pancholi, twenty-eight of the more than 530 cupules on the cave's walls have exfoliated and were recovered from an excavation, together with



Some of the over 530 cupules on a wall in Daraki-Chattan Cave.

Daraki-Chattan Cave.

stratified Lower Palaeolithic stone tools. Even some of the hammerstones used in their production were excavated, occurring in the chopping-tool layers near the base of the sediment sequence. This rock art was created several hundred thousand years ago and is many times the age of the oldest known rock art in Europe, which is less than 40,000 years old. The second-oldest currently known rock art, which is identical, occurs in southern Africa and is about two hundred millennia old.

On this basis, and considering that seafaring, which requires language, also began in southern Asia, it is now believed that the human ability of using symbols, our most important ability, may have first emerged in that part of the world. Africa is no doubt the cradle of

OSL dating in Auditorium Cave.