

Anthropomorphic Forms In Pilak Terracotta Plaques of Tripura

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Abstract

Anthropomorphism is the acknowledgment of human individualities and abilities of non-human beings, objects, natural, or mystic phenomena. Animals, Gods, the forces of the environment, and unobserved or unidentified authors of chance are numerous subjects of anthropomorphosis. The term comes from two Greek words, (anthrōpos), meaning "human," and (morphē), meaning "shape" or "form." The suffix "-ism" has originated from the morpheme "-ism" in the Greek language. The authentic 'date' when anthropomorphic art came to light isn't well documented so we can only rely on what has been left behind for us to observe. This is most noted in the literature, paintings, fables, and sculptures. The terracotta plaques of Pilak indicate a colossal religious culture in the past. Today Pilak has become a major attraction due to these terracotta plaques. Many other such beautiful plaques depicting a very vibrant and synthetic past of Tripura, the Archaeological Survey of India has today declared Pilak as an important archaeological site. Pilak is situated in the Jolaibari the South Tripura district of Tripura.

KEYWORDS: Anthropomorphic, Terracotta, Plaques, Pilak.

Introduction

1049–square-kilometer-long and three side bordered by Bangladesh, Tripura is the 3rd smallest state in India. Its population coming up to 3,671,032 constitutes 0.3 per cent of the population of India. It can boast of a rich heritage in art and culture comprising, among others, architecture, terracotta relief sculpture and terracotta plaques. About 30 per cent of the population are indigenous people belonging to as many as 19 different communities and they are described as scheduled tribes. There are also a good many sub-tribes inhabiting Tripura. Kokborok people have formed the major community. The major ethno linguistic people living in Tripura are Bengalis. Among all archaeological sites there are two sites famous for terracotta architecture and terracotta plaques, one at Pilak which belongs to South Tripura district in south Tripura and the other at Boxanagar in Sepahijala districts in west Tripura, both site is very famous for Buddhist architecture and cults.

Objectives:

1. To study the development of Anthropomorphic Art in the Pilak terracotta plaques
2. To comprehend how the earlier anthropomorphic images influenced the Pilak Terracotta plaques.

Methodology:

The proposed research paper will be done on the basis of frequent visual observation particularly by focusing the study on the unique moulded terracotta plaques of Shyamsundertila of Pilak region. The research will also be concentrated on a comparative study of the different developments in deferent areas such as The Lion-man of the Hohlenstein-Stadelwas discovered in German in a cave 1939. The research aims to emphasize how anthropomorphic figure has been depicted in the plaques of Pilak from the Buddhist and Hindu prehistoric fables and stories. The study will majorly follow the methodology of the analytical type of research. Since the study is focused on the stylistic changes of the anthropomorphic art and technical innovations in the terracotta plaques through space and composition.

Anthropomorphic:

Anthropomorphism is the ascription of human appearances and abilities to non-human beings, objects, natural, or mystical phenomena. Gods, animals, the forces of environment, and unseen or unknown authors of chance are frequent subjects of anthropomorphosis. The term comes from two Greek words, (anthrōpos), meaning "human," and (morphē), meaning "shape" or "form." The suffix "-ism" has originated from the morpheme "-isma" in the Greek language. The concrete 'date' when anthropomorphic art came to light isn't well documented so we can only rely on what has been left behind for us to observe. This is distinctly noted in literature, paintings, sculptures and fables.

In the upper Paleolithic about 40,000 years ago human behavior was modern in primary stages for examples of zoomorphic (animal-shaped) works of art ensue that may indicate the most primitive evidence we have of anthropomorphism in art, principles and appearance. The very oldest sculpture known in the history is the Ivory made sculpture, the Lion man of the Haldenstein Stadel, from Germany, a human-shaped animal sculpture or a statuette with a lion's head, determined to be about 40, 000 years old.



Löwenmensch, a lion-headed figurine found in Germany, dating to the Upper Paleolithic of about 35,000 to 40,000 years ago.(image sources wikipedi.org)

As anthropomorphism gradually developed in to profusion of fables tales and expressions have begun to envelope the human culture. We see images engraved out from the great Egyptian Gods to the Celtic tales of old which depict frogs and dogs walking rabbits.

Square stamps seal of Harappa made of fired steatite with engravings animals and short inscriptions are one of the most typical archeological marks of the Indus Civilization. The standard Indus seals bear animal icons, mainly images in the profile of single standing animal, but also composite creature and narrative scenes possibly have been related to religious and or mythological beliefs. These types of the seal were suddenly introduced around 2800 BCE,

The two centuries spanning 2800 and 2600 BCE represent the peak of a long process of integration and cultural assimilation of different regional cultures that resulted in the Indus Civilization. The construction of Indus Chimaeras has also entangled that the creature includes not only parts of living creatures, like the snake, the tiger etc., but also of other imaginary mythological beings like a unicorn, the human-faced markhor, and the yogi or the centaur. By the Harappa (c.2200 – 1900 BCE) the information that was previously conveyed through zoomorphic and geometric symbols shifted to the more specialized technology or writing. Even if it is still difficult to chronologically order the inscribed objects from many Indus sites, it is quite evident that during the last centuries of the third millennium BCE the use of writing was largely extended

The appearance of the first anthropomorphic figurines at the beginning of the Upper Paleolithic is seen as a hallmark of cultural development hitherto unknown in hominine evolution. The late hominines underwent a unique development to bicultural beings (Gibson 1996; Tomasello 1999, 2008); Richerson and Boyd 2001; Hublin 2008, with modern Homo sapiens as the probable author of the Upper Paleolithic works of art (Hahn 1986; Mithen 1996; Holder Mann et al. 2001; Conard 2006, 2008; Hublin 2008; Bolus 2009).

Findings:

About the 40000 years (calBP) previously, physically modern Homo sapiens reached Europe, and in the south-western Germany (Higham et al. 2012; Conard & Bolus 2008). According to the current data, after spreading the Homo sapiens across the Europe the figurative art was developed. Though, the early stages of figurative art are until today not entirely unspoken and new suggestion and discoveries might deny this statement (e.g., Aubert et al. 2014).

The Primary form of artistic expression are associated with the Aurignacian of the Upper Paleolithic period. Painted rocks from the Grotta di Fumane is one of the primary and the ancient art form of artistic expression in Europe. (Broglio & Dalmeri 2005; Broglio et al. 2007) Perhaps certain cave paintings in Spain like the stippled red disk from El Castillo (Pike et al. 2012). In France what Auroignacian is the primary example and its defined as style from the Aurignacian (Leroi-Gourhan 1965; Delluc & Delluc 1991). La Ferrassie and Belcayre representations between these instances. The Aurignacian also dated that dancing women is a very small sculpture in Austria. (Neugebauer-Maresch 1989), carved from green schist. At the end few paintings from Grotte Chauvet (Chauvet

et al. 1996; Clottes 2001; Clottes&Geneste 2007) were also produced during the Aurignacian, eventually now a days the exact time of the cave paintings become more questionable (Züchner 2007, 2014; Pettitt 2008; Combier&Jouve 2012, 2014; Pettitt&Bahn 2014).

It should be noted is this connection that south western Germany and Baden Wurttemberg **play a** dynamic role in understanding the Aurignacian artworks. HohleFels (Conard 2009) and (Hahn 1988) in the Ach Valley, and HohlensteinStadel Cave (Wetzel 1961; Schmid et al. 1989) in the Lone Valley and Vogelherd (Riek 1934; Conard et al. 2007; Conard 2007a) . The art Works were discovered in the Aurignacian. In the cave paintings was not found but sculpture figure carved from ivory and showing animals and human beings. We often come across profound that horse figurine is the very well documented objects of art (Riek 1934, pp. 284-285) and the small elephant (Conard 2007a) from Vogel herd, the Oran's from Geißenklösterle (Hahn 1988), the Lion Man from Stadel Cave in Haldenstein (Hahn 1970, 1971a, 1971b; Schmid et. al 1989), as well as the ancient well-known image of a woman, the "Venus" from HohleFels (Conard 2009; Conard&Malina 2009). From the bird bones the flutes were made and the other four side ivories were found additionally (Hahn & Münzel 1995; Conard 2007b; Conard et al. 2004; 2009a; 2009b). However these remains were well known as the fragmented parts of an ivory statuette in 1939, they were not indicated any additional contemplation. Lithic arte facts were exceptional in the small chamber.

The Lion Man:

The Lion Man is a sculpture made by the piece of the mammoth ivory, with a great originality, the figure is upright standing with resting arms at its sides. The masterpiece is near about 40000 years old, and 31 centimeters tall. It has a mixing of both Human and lion, partly the lower part is a human body and the upper part is a lion head. The position of the figure is little bit upright, and perhaps tiptoes, the legs and the arms apart to the sides is slightly slender, a slightly slender figure with cat-like posture with strong shoulder like human figure, but the thighs and hips of an Lion posture. The details of the face appearance he is watching, he is concentrating and he is listening. He is dominant, mysterious and from a world beyond ordinary nature. It is the ancient and oldest known example of anthropomorphic art being that does not exist in physical world but symbolizes philosophies about the supernatural. The LionMan which is found in 1939 in a cave in what is now southern Germany, the Lion Man itself creates the sense of a story, which may exist located in the mythology of that period. It has sensibilities of supernatural phenomena. It is very much difficult to identify what that story was about or whether he was an avatar, and deity to the soul world,

Some Anthropomorphic plaques of Pilak:

Figure 01



photograph taken by author Subrata Dey 2016

Among the numerous subjects depicted on the Pilak plaques, the most dominant anthropomorphic plaques is that of an animal with a human head, the lower portion is like an animal and the upper portion is like a human (Fig. 1). Most of the anthropomorphic plaques of Pilak having the same similarities with the mixing of animal and human being. Somehow it has a feeling of the depicted story of Hindu Avatars, scholars believe that the plaques depict the story of Lion Avatar (Narashima) of Lord Vishnu. The Plaque is the wide spectrum of quality and size, ranging from decorative, detailed images to small and simplified versions of a human posture like animal figure. The image has a bold and heavy gesture, apparently, the upper portion is well moulded, and both the hands have a unique design holding some weapons. The unique gesture of the figure showing forcefully attacking movement.

Figure 02



The Photograph taken by the Author Subratadey 2016 in Pilak

Here is the another image (figure 02) which is having the same similarities of the figure which is found in the Pilak terracotta Plaques. Most of the anthropomorphic plaques have same gesture with the animal and human mixing form. The images is very well moduled but the upper portion is very similar to the human head structure. Somewhere historian believe that this is might be the Hanuman Avatar who is the famous figure of Ramayana, the long tail and the back side indicate the similarities of Hanuman. The size of the plaques is very small, each plaques 8 x 8 inch long.

Figure 03



Photograph taken by the Author SubrataDey in 2016.

This Plaques also found in the same part of the pilak, having the same posture and gesture of the human headed animal figure with the same expression. (Figure03)

Figure 04



Photograph taken by Author 2016 in Pilak

In figure no 04 the plaques carrying the same similarities of earliest anthropomorphic forms, has been found in Pilakregion, but the above Image has also some dissimilarities from earliest images. The figure has 4 hands in the upper portion and it is easily identifying that, the plaques might be a mythological character. In the epic Hindu stories, generally the goddesses have more than two hands such as like Maa Kaliand,Durgaetc. But the above plaques may be remind the Avatar of Lord Vishnu (Narashima).The figure is well modulated the four hands is easily identify with two animal lags . But the human head with the crown is suggested that this is a human head animal figure, may be some epic character.

Conclusion :

On the present-day evidence, we cannot ascribe a single interpretation to all cases of images. The figures depicted on the Pilak Terracotta of Tripura carry the influences of anthropomorphism. Most of the cases in the south-east Region the anthropomorphic forms have been found in the epic stories and fables. The Pilak basically a mixing culture of Hindu and Buddhist believes. In the Buddhist Jataka stories and Hindu mythologies, the anthropomorphic figure is a very common phenomenon.

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