



## Rock Bruisings along the Dyke-Swarms: A Gallery of site history in Advibhavi-Rampura, South India

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### Introduction

South India is India's most decisive rock art region. Its geological and temporal contexts have contributed to the development of diverse rock art forms (e.g., see Allchin and Allchin 1994-95; Arjun 2018; Blinkhorn 2021). The sandstone formations around Badami (Kaladgi Basin) have rich illustrations of painted images relatively dated to the Mesolithic period. Similarly, the limestone/ quartzite formations centring the Kurnool and Cudapah regions (Kurnool-Cudapah sub-Basins) sheltered the painted images from Mesolithic to early history (See Korisetar 2018, for a detailed review on Indian rock art studies). The theme of the panels in both the regions generally focused on hunting-gathering activities and prolifically on curvy shaped human images showcasing shamanism. The most trending change in the rock art forms and the techniques began to appear in the older gneissic landscapes of southern Deccan Plateau owing to intensification in subsistence economy during the Neolithic (3000-1200 BCE) and Iron Age (1200-300 BCE). The rock bruising/ abrading became a hub of art in the dyke/ gabbro associated granitic hills in north-eastern Karnataka and north-western Andhra Pradesh (Arjun 2018).

This paper is specifically focused on the mafic dyke swarm series formations at Advibhavi-Rampura (Fig. 1) in Raichur (Karnataka, India). It was occupied perhaps during the Neolithic-Iron Age period. It explains 1) how rock bruising narrated comprehensive site history from the Neolithic period to the contemporary activities testifying

to adverse changes in the local landscape. 2) It also explains the development of demonstrative art forms at the sites as 're-invented' content using existing abrading techniques (Arjun 2017).

### Dyke swarms at Advibhavi-Rampura, and the geo-archaeological context

Dyke swarms are intrusive igneous parallel, linear and low elevated formations (as exposed on the surface, see Fig. 2 for a partial view of dyke swarms) extending miles together in the denudational landscape settings in Eastern Dharwar Craton. Dyke formations were a great source of rocks for the production of celts in the Southern Neolithic culture. During this period, the dyke swarms often turned into a centre of resource locations, not limited to foraging dyke blanks for stone tool production. Still, beyond that, they became resource locations and gradually developed into lithic workshops, settlements and rock art sites (Arjun 2021). Beyond all these, mafic dykes are dark coloured igneous rocks, their surface when abraded; the canvas provides a precise exposure for the artwork. Here is a site in the backdrop of a low elevated dyke swarm stretching 3.5 km (Fig. 2) located in between two hamlets, Advibhavi and Rampura. The site appears as an open natural gallery of rock art images, illustrating generations of narrative scenes since the Neolithic period. There is much more to anticipate and study from this site in future rock art productions, as it is a living site holding ethnographic significance.

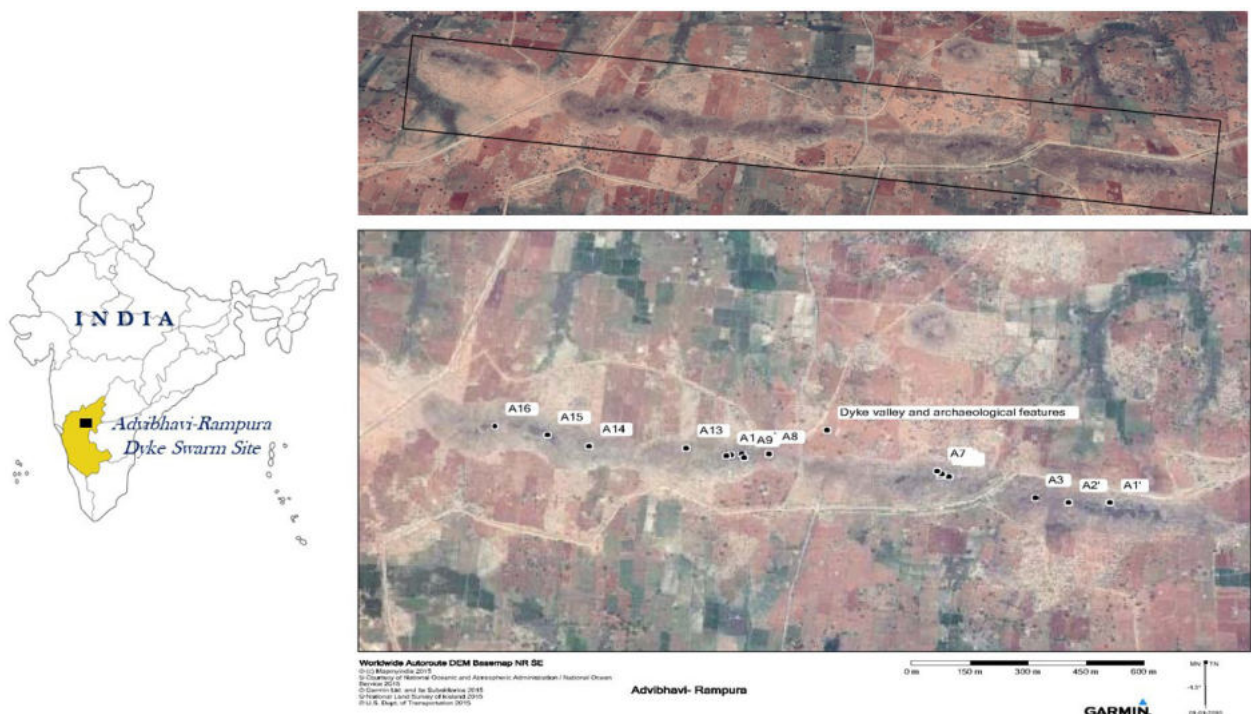
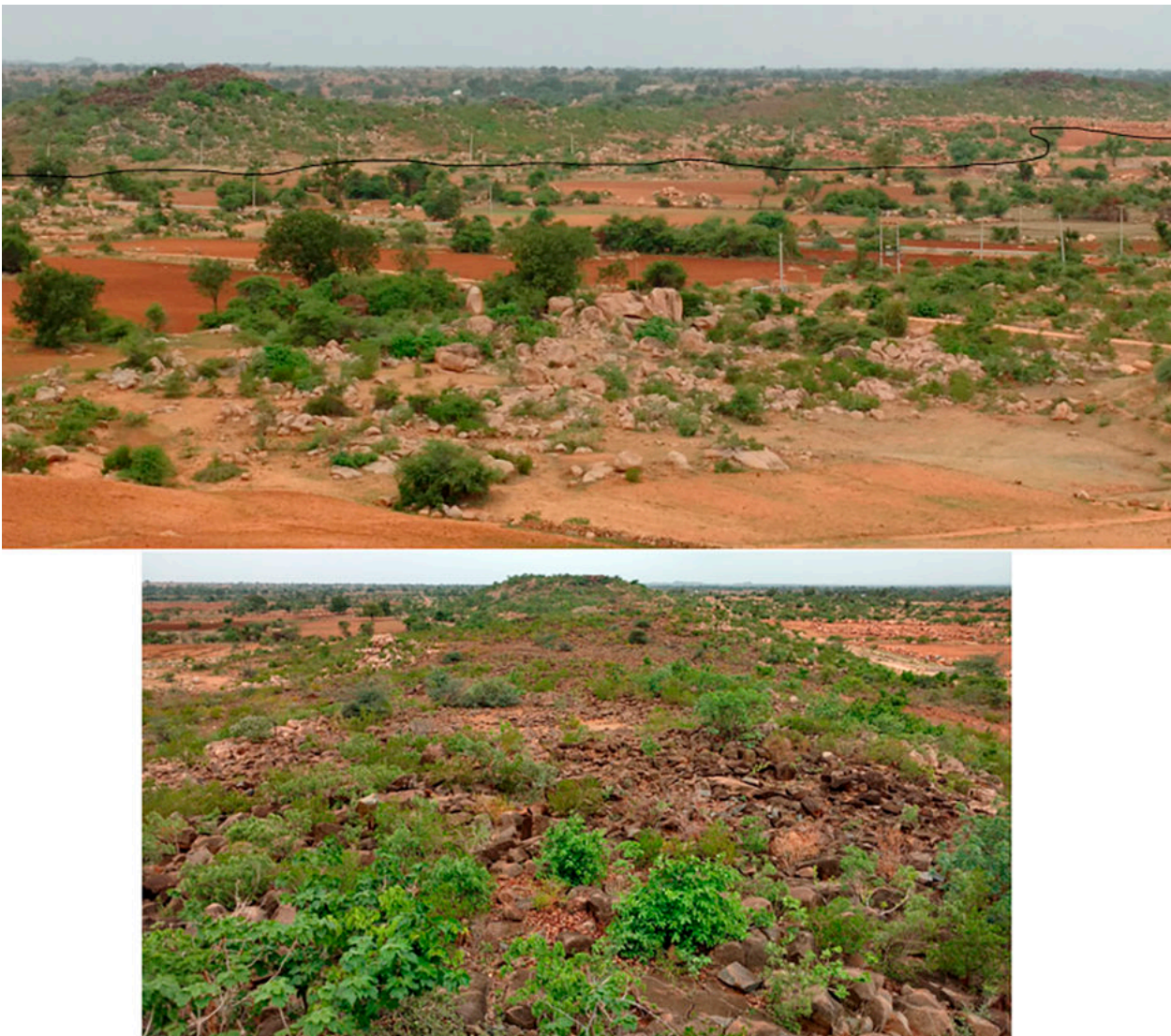


Figure 1. Dyke swarm stretching 3.5 km at Advibhavi- Rampura in Raichur. The locations indicated are rock art clusters spreading across 2.5km. See Table 1.



*Figure 2. General view of dyke swarms at Advibhavi-Rampura. Photo by author, 2016.*

At Advibhavi-Rampura, sixteen clusters are recorded at a stretch of 2.5km (Fig. 1 and Table 1). Rock bruising of vivid images, mainly of humped cattle in different forms (Fig. 3 and 4), deer, dog, peacock and anthropomorphs are recorded. Each cluster is identified based on the minimum density of five rock bruising and the archaeological features in locational contexts. The image panels are often found associated with archaeological features such as the ringing rocks (rock gongs), modified water pools, celt grinding grooves, bedrock mortars and settlement terraces (Fig. 5, 6 and Table 1).

In a few clustered locations, we can trace the development of modern art forms imitating the content and the abrasion technique of the Neolithic- Iron Age period. Particularly imitations of cattle images are commonly evident with added features depicting cattle with the decorated body (Fig. 7) and being tamed with ploughshares. The hunting dogs with human images are new additions to their imitative ventures (Fig. 8). On the other hand, increasing innovations are also seen in the panels displaying vernacular architecture (Fig. 9) and merchandised vehicles such as the earth excavator, car

and bi-cycle (Fig. 10). Most images are made on smaller surface/ field boulders; they are spottable as one walks through the site. The images are not concentrated on rock shelters or inclined structural rocks, as evident in the other neolithic settlement sites in Raichur Doab (e.g., Maladkal, Kotekal, Anandgal etc., Arjun 2017).

#### **Rock art and site history**

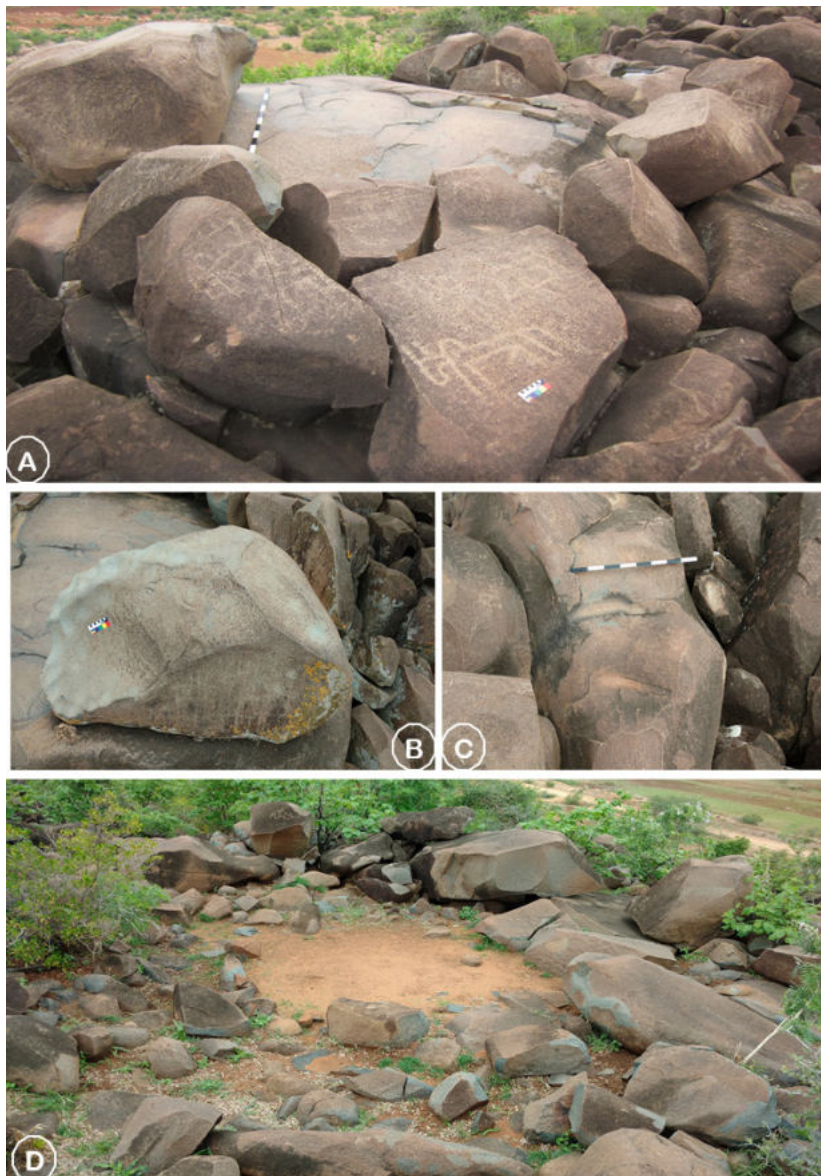
Art conceptualises various interceptions occurring in the socio-cultural practices, technological changes and changing dynamics with humans and ecology at different interval periods. Accordingly, new art forms add-on overlapping/ appear next to the earlier images, which have helped us to develop a comprehensive chronicle of the sites (Arjun 2018a; 2020). The current research attempts to develop a 'site history model' based on art composition evidence and observation of demographic changes. At Advibhavi-Rampura, three distinct phases in rock art production are observed (Table 2), which can be stratified based on both the content and the morphological features based on the relative degree of



**Figure 3.** Humped cattle with the ithyphallic depiction in thick outline form. Photo by author, 2016.



**Figure 4.** High raised horns and humped cattle in silhouette. Photo by author, 2016.



**Figure 5.** Settlement features associated with rock bruising locations developed during the Neolithic and Iron Age periods. Photos by author, 2016.



Figure 6. Modified water pools for water collection on different locations of the dyke swarm at the site. Photos by author, 2016.

*Table 1. Cluster wise distribution of rock art locations and associated archaeological features on the dyke swarms of Advibhavi-Rampura. Shaded boxes indicate the presence of the various features showing the locational contexts of engagements (After Arjun 2017: Table 3.49).*

| Locality no. | Rock Bruisings | Ringing Rocks | Water Pools | Axe grinding grooves | Bedrock mortars | Settlement terraces |
|--------------|----------------|---------------|-------------|----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| A1           |                |               |             |                      |                 |                     |
| A2           |                |               |             |                      |                 |                     |
| A3           |                |               |             |                      |                 |                     |
| A4           |                |               |             |                      |                 |                     |
| A5           |                |               |             |                      |                 |                     |
| A6           |                |               |             |                      |                 |                     |
| A7           |                |               |             |                      |                 |                     |
| A8           |                |               |             |                      |                 |                     |
| A9           |                |               |             |                      |                 |                     |
| A10          |                |               |             |                      |                 |                     |
| A11          |                |               |             |                      |                 |                     |
| A12          |                |               |             |                      |                 |                     |
| A13          |                |               |             |                      |                 |                     |
| A14          |                |               |             |                      |                 |                     |
| A15          |                |               |             |                      |                 |                     |
| A16          |                |               |             |                      |                 |                     |



*Figure 7. Images of cattle in artistic lines on the body, also anthropomorphs seen in tamping efforts. Photo by author, 2016.*



*Figure 8. The upper image outlined and silhouette depicted cattle in bulgy body, and human images are seen in action to tame the cattle. Lower image a pack of dogs and tamers. Photo by author, 2016.*



Figure 9. Bruised images of vernacular architecture of temple category. Photos by author, 2016



**Figure 10.** Bruised images of merchandised vehicles and slender bodied cattle image in naturalistic forms. Writings in Kannada and English are also traceable in the panel. See Figure 12 for the other side view of the image boulder. Bruised image photo by author, 2016. Additional images are from internet sources.

patination on the abraded lines or silhouette surface.

Three stages of development are classifiable in the rock art productions at the site (Table 2). In the first phase, typical cattle images in thicker lines and silhouettes suggest their occurrence during the Neolithic-Iron Age period and associated developments occurred with the settlement terraces and other features such as the ringing rocks, grooves further discern their activities, particularly in the locations of A1, A2, A4, A6, A7 and A10. This phase is relatively datable to the transitional period of Neolithic to Iron Age, first millennium BCE (Arjun 2021).

There is a hiatus in tracing the activities that occurred at the site between the first and second phases.

The second phase is mainly a phase of attempts towards imitating the cattle images from the earlier

phase with the moderate stylisation of bulgy cattle body, extreme stylistic horns by thinner abraded line and silhouette. A keen sense of visual observations made by the modern shepherds/herding communities on the existing rock art images and style forms of the Neolithic period led to the blending of contemporary activities centring around animal domestication. Hunting dogs in action with their tamers appearing along with the vernacular script (Fig. 10) on the panels became a new trend of content in the second phase. Locations such as A2, A3, A4, A7 and A10 provided the canvas for new experimentations.

The third phase is much more recent in its production and significantly testifies to the landscape changes occurring at the site since the 1980s due to agriculture, construction of irrigational canals and the road lines.

Table 2. Site history model of rock art in Advibhavi-Rampura.

| Characteristics                 | First Phase   | Second Phase   | Third Phase  |
|---------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Image morphology                | Thick abrasion  | Thin abrasion  | Thin abrasion  |
| Colour                          | Darker yellow-reddish and dull turned patinated appearance  | Relatively creamy colour compared to the third phase   | White and bright appearance  |
| Cattle images                   | Cattle in naturalistic- crude with prominent ithyphallic feature  | Imitative cattle images blended and bulgy body with taming attempts                                      | Cattle in naturalistic forms with decorated (textile like) patterns on the body  |
| Other contents                  | Anthropomorphs in community gatherings and ithyphallic images   | Hunting dogs and dog taming. Kannada script, nouns   | Earth excavators, car and bicycles. Vernacular temple structures. Kannada script, nouns  |
| Features at clusters/ locations | Ringed rocks<br>Bedrock mortars<br>Modified terraces  | None   | Ringed rocks   |
| Source of images/subject        | Cattle domestication and community gatherings   | Older cattle images and observation of contemporary agriculture activities                               | Contemporary settlement activities, agricultural landscaping, road infrastructure and travelling. Also, the ability to write among the abraders. |
| Relative period                 | 1 <sup>st</sup> millennium BCE<br>Neolithic- Iron age transition. Based on the naturalistic-crude form of cattle images and settlement features | 18 <sup>th</sup> and 19 <sup>th</sup> century (Based on the script and movement of herders' communities) | 1980s to current (Based on the depiction of the Hindustani Contessa car model)   |



Figure 11. Written "ಕೃಷಿ" in Kannada, meaning cattle. Photo by author, 2016.



Figure 12. Slender bodied cattle image in naturalistic forms and the image surface used for ringing rock gongs. Photo by author, 2016.

Locations such as A5, A9 and A11-A16 are locations engaged in current art forms. We can see two extreme ends in the contents here. Earth excavators, roof topped bicycle, and car similar to the Hindustan Contessa model are abraded behind the cattle images. The cattle images are now slender-bodied with naturalistic features lacking exaggeration in depicting cattle's hump, horns and phallus. The surface of the cattle images is used in combination with ringing rocks aside from the bruising. The third phase suggests the change in artists who are possibly not the herding communities passing

by; instead, they are part of the individuals working in the adjacent agricultural fields from the nearby hamlets. Ringing gongs is a source of leisure and entertainment for them, and often ringing rocks call for the attention of individuals located at far distances. The foothill of dyke swarms is exposed to extensive landscaping primarily by clearing field boulders and is piled up for marking field boundaries. This is done through massive merchandised earth movers/ excavators. The images of the earth excavator at the site symbolise the Modus operandi of the modern population who are rigorously transforming the landscape of a prehistoric site into a new landform. The images stand themselves as a testimony to tracing the trajectories in the rock art sites like the Advibhavi-Rampura. The rock art production has not come to an end at this site; it continues to have unembellished anticipation of recording new art forms in the future.



## Conclusion

Advibhavi-Rampura is a prominent rock art site located along the dyke swarm series stretching for 3.5km in the gneissic landscape of Raichur Doab in South India. Rock bruising and associated archaeological features of vivid settlement activities were systematically studied with geospatial tools. Geo-referenced data and rock art content indicated the spatial-temporal developments in forming a vast gallery of rock art locations/ clusters. Further, the art contents helped categorise the site's history into three phases; the earliest is the Neolithic-Iron Age phase, the second is the modern phase and the ongoing contemporary phase. The first phase establishes its antiquity with the regional Neolithic villages; similar images are comparable to the full-fledged Neolithic and Iron age settlements in the Raichur Doab. The second and third phases are recent; their art images mirror modern activities supported by the Kannada script and the movement of merchandised vehicles. Artists of the last third/ existing phase have endorsed landscape changes in the Neolithic sites, initially being a denudational landscape and now turned into agricultural landforms on the clearance of loads of field boulders. Images of earth excavators and ploughshares mounted cattle tilling the land further testify to changes in the land use pattern and its Modus operandi. Continued the tradition of rock bruising and ringing gongs in different styles and forms, including but not limited to using image boulders for ringing rocks, projection of cattle driven field ploughing scenes, attempts to imitate older cattle images, use of regional scripts to identify the cattle, images of vernacular architecture and so on became common. All these data have helped this research establish the site history of Advibhavi-Rampura into a three-phase model and trace landscape changes in the site environs as historical trajectories invariably influenced in the

production of images. As the bruising of images and ringing gongs are currently in practice, the site has ethnographic importance for periodic research.

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