

Meanings of Sri Lankan Aborigines' Stone Paintings; A Visual Analysis of Gira Pokunu Hela Stone Paintings

I.M.T. Ilangasinghe

Department of Painting, University of the Visual and Performing Arts
sathsarailangasinghe@gmail.com

Stone paintings, an art form produced by a pre-literate society, can be identified from many continents across the world. Stone paintings of Sri Lankan aborigines are also found in many places across the country. Gira Pokunu Hela aborigines have used visual factors (characters, materials, environment) in relation to their own attitudes in painting stone paintings. The aim of the research is to identify these signs and their meanings. "What are the implicit meanings of the Gira Pokununa Hela Aboriginal stone paintings?" is the present research problem. Through on-site observations, data such as photographs, drafts, and information were gathered by accessing Gira Pokunu Hela, an uncelebrated sacred site. The ABC triangle theory by the Norwegian philosopher Johan Galtung was used in the stone painting analysis. According to the ABC triangle theory, the end result of any process (conflict or otherwise) is the visible behaviour or process. But Galtung points out that the visible process is not a single event, but an invisible cognitive and emotional process. This political analysis can also be substituted for the analysis of the creative work of stone paintings. Visual conflict, or the expression recognizable as behaviour, becomes the visual process to the viewer of the stone paintings. It is theoretically identifiable through the ABC triangle that the conflict, opposition, or expression is an invisible reflection of the intellectual and emotional feelings, understanding, and beliefs in the form of the attitude of the painter who drew the stone paintings, whereas the historical conditions related to the political, cultural economy of the painter is reflected as the context. Therefore, it was analyzed that the invisible context (the nature of social structures) and attitudes directly contribute to the visible creative conflict of the painter's act of stone painting. By identifying the invisible attitudes and contexts of the Gira Pokunu Hela stone paintings, their meanings can be better understood. Their implicit meanings reflect symbols of social attitudes and family, love and sexuality, power and pride, attitudes towards nature, and relationships with animals. It can be concluded that they reflect the unique characteristics of the indigenous people.

Keywords: Identity, Implicit meanings, Sri Lankan aborigines, Stone paintings, Visual symbolism,