

## Central Madhya Pradesh style rock paintings

A stylistic study of the "Master ceiling" ASI R.C. 17 in Locality I: Conclusions

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This research report is part of the project: "Continuity, change and evolution of the Central Madhya Pradesh style rock paintings in Central Madhya Pradesh".

The complete research report includes the text and the bibliographical references, and an illustrative part. These two volumes are intended for rock art researchers.

Below the "Conclusions" of this research report.



## CONCLUSIONS

This follow-up research has in origin the need for small-scale studies with problem-oriented in-depth analyses of single relevant localities instead of unmethodical global surveys of large areas (Pearce, 2006). The goal is to distinguish substyles in zoomorphic parietal representations. The primary attitude is to differentiate in a representational style from a contrastive perspective.

The starting point in our prehistoric open-air rock art research is:

- The rock painting, and not its context.
- Style is an essential research subject.
- Rock paintings are not signed and dated.
- The image of the rock art corpus is fragmentary.
- Rock paintings were often in use during an extended period.
- Rock paintings are often the result of an additive process.
- A rock painting is an element out of a chain of artistic events.
- Only the dating of the artistic chain has relevance.
- Dating should be problem-oriented and not object-oriented.
- A rock art site and its content must be considered as an open find.
- Identification of a prehistoric rock painting can be contentious.
- The meaning of a prehistoric rock painting is outside the scope of the rock art researcher.

### Definitions

The Central Madhya Pradesh rock paintings style or hence-forth CMP-style is, in its formal simplicity, a typical example of a linear style using the line as its first and only means of definition. “The CMP-style is a highly formalised, codified artistic tradition, and represents an artistic entity that exists separately from others and with a clear identity of its own. Because of its distinctive style, it also acts as a clear territorial graphic marker and emblem.” (Schaap, 2018). Three groups of CMP-style paintings can be distinguished: the strictly white, the red and the two-coloured ones. The sizes of the paintings range from ca 25-45 cm. White paintings are the oldest and tend to be somewhat larger. This study is centered on two-coloured CMP-style paintings, which are to be considered as adapted white paintings. This strict CMP-style can be defined by its characteristic oblique, freestanding white lines that create a V-or W-shaped infilling. “The CMP-style is, in essence, animal art and technically a brush painting medium with linear, rectangular and triangular form elements as key attributes. This results in a geometric form language often with robust, compact, stocky figures always in profile or side view and with the emphasis on spinal and abdominal contour and head, neck, antlers and horns. Anatomical proportions are not respected in these often stiff figures, and an animal drawn in the CMP-style is in its formal simplicity and disregard for exactitude largely an addition of separate segments and elements, divided into distinct form units. It does not constitute a real and thoroughly integrated unit, let alone a realistically depicted animal.” (Schaap, 2018).

An elemental deconstruction shows that: “A rectangular core is the main distinguishing mark of animal representations in the CMP-style. It forms the mainframe of the drawing and sometimes tends to have a slightly oval shape, with always a straight abdominal line as one of the most typical and characteristic stylistic constants of the CMP-style. A second important element is a heavily marked contour or outline, acting as a frame, executed with thick brushwork. The area inside the rectangular core always consists of geometric infill, linear, rectangular, and triangular. Round shapes are non-existent. In a series of paintings of what is considered to be the same CMP-substyle, the depiction of the internal infill will be consistent and similar everywhere. Apart from clearly unfinished paintings, an animal representation belonging to the CMP-style will always present V/W-infill since this constitutes the essential distinguishing component of the CMP-style.” The second outstanding characteristic is the rectangle. “The rectangle presents the mainframe in paintings in the CMP-style, other than related or non-related styles or their forerunner tradition where the core of the representation consists of a rectangle. It is important to understand that not every painting showing a rectangle plus infill can be ascribed to the CMP-style. Most of the numerous groups of paintings with rectangular core presenting infill cannot be attributed to the CMP-style, notwithstanding the fact that they all share the horror vacui principle.” (Schaap, 2018).

### **Iconography: the CMP-style with V/W-infill is an animal art**

This representational style, primarily dictated by tradition, is organised in horizontal series and centered on images of animals, i.e. mammals. Other subjects, apart from some humans, are absent. It represents a harmonious animal pantheon with a limited range of animal subjects, viz. primarily deer, an idyllic subject expressed in a variety of zoomorphic substyles. It depicts an animal world dominated first, in its white phase, by a few different deer species and some bovids. Most figurative depictions consist of ungulates of the Cervidae family, such as Axis (*Axis axis*), Sambar (*Cervus unicolour*) and Barasingha (*Cervus duvaucelii*), with subsequently in its red phase, an increasing number of bovids such as probably Gaur (*Bos gaurus*) and some additional species as rhinoceros, elephant and sometimes an unidentified quadruped. In a large number of two-coloured works, consisting of white paintings with red additions of unknown age, wild boar, leopard and tiger and some flocks of crane-like birds are also, exceptionally, depicted. Tradition seems to prescribe that in each phase or period, all the paintings have the same colour. So first, all the paintings are white, viz. the “White period”, and later on all the paintings are red. Since the paintings had been white for what must have felt like immemorial times, the passage or swift from white to red coloured paintings must have had an enormous impact.

### **Characteristics of the CMP-style with V/W-infill**

“Some characteristic features of the highly codified CMP-style in which order, structure, planning, and tradition are guiding and preciously respected principals.” (Schaap, 2018):

- . Same limited series of subjects, namely mammals.
- . Colour is the most important constant.

- . An animal is depicted in its entirety.
- . In profile.
- . The straight abdominal line is the second important constant.
- . Naturalism is absent.
- . Expression of movement is not particularly developed.
- . Little variety of stances.
- . An animal is always upwards, never in a lying position with its legs to the side or feet up.
- . Deer tail is upside and bovid tail downwards.
- . In a specific substyle, most of the paintings are of the same size.
- . Sizes of the paintings are between 25-45 cm.
- . Paintings are organised in horizontal series.
- . The same distance between the paintings.
- . No superimposition.
- . Natural features, like rock formations, are not included in the paintings.

### **Methodology: sequencing of the CMP-style rock paintings**

“Strict tradition-bound rules in the CMP-style as to superimposition do not facilitate the establishment of the order of production. The CMP-style artists appear to be very style-conscious and seem to have a deep respect for their work and their fellow-artists and a manifest aversion to superimpose deliberately. As a direct consequence, a limited number of CMP-style stratigraphies is available.” (Schaap, 2018). Because there is no superposition and only juxtaposition of paintings on the “master ceiling”, the order of succession must be extrapolated.

The protocol used for establishing the sequence of the paintings is summarised here. “To determine the order of succession, five parameters are used. Each animal representation is tested against these five main criteria. In order of importance: 1) stratigraphy, 2) infill, 3) colour, 4) stylistic aspects, and sometimes 5) spatial distribution and area-availability-and-use-pattern. In addition to subject matter and size, there are also other points of attention, such as quality and execution.” (Schaap, 2013, 2015).

“Stratigraphy of rock paintings is used to provide a relative frame of reference for chronology, and relative dating refers to the ordering of rock paintings within a relative temporal sequence. However, a significant number of superimpositions is needed to generate a relevant sequence.” (Schaap, 2018). “Stratigraphy: order can only be determined by a clear-cut stratigraphy, to avoid incidental situations, preferably by several clear-cut stratigraphies. However, stratigraphy only indicates the order and does not coherently lead to conclusions about development. Order can be determined, and development can only be reconstructed.” (Schaap, 2018).

“Regarding spatial distribution, it is here assumed that, when only limited space was available, the most appropriate parts of the rock face have been fully or almost fully occupied by coherent series of larger sized paintings in the same CMP-substyle. Consequently, these series may be included in the first work in order of production. The spatial distribution suggests that the first creators started with a well-balanced distribution of the paintings in

several series or registers. One first took up the most appropriate space and used only later the remaining and less suitable space. As time passed and space diminished, smaller paintings were then produced. This spatial distribution and area-availability-and-use-pattern have been used to trace and reconstruct the stylistic evolution and distinguishing substyles." (Schaap, 2018). Our formula, including that only later the remaining and less suitable space was used, predicts that paintings at the edge of a panel or in a limited space situation are sometimes of more recent production and therefore differ from the adjacent ones. The spatial distribution and area-availability-and-use-pattern also predict that increased use of a locality led to smaller sized paintings. This vital conclusion could also have relevance for some other artistic traditions (Schaap, 2018). Elsewhere has been argued (Schaap, 2017, 2018) that in the "side panel" of the "main rock shelter" of Locality I (ASI R.C. 2) it seemed as if they had started with large-sized paintings preferably in the most appropriate spatial positions. This led to the aforesaid spatial distribution and area-availability-and-use-pattern formula.

To conclude: "a panel with rock paintings must be treated as "a potential open find", as it is available for rock art production for a seemingly unlimited period." (Sognnes, 2003). After Wahlgren "the ages of petroglyphs may be of little importance because the panels were used during a long period. Search for possible connections may sometimes be more fruitful without exact dates." (Wahlgren, 1995).

### **The CMP-style with V/W-infill and other infill traditions in Locality I**

The CMP-style with V/W-infill and the "master ceiling" (ASI R.C. 17) analysis should be seen in the context of other styles in Locality I. Apart from numerous older styles, at least six other, partly more recent infill traditions mostly with rectangular frames, can be distinguished in Locality I, the CMP-style being just one of them. In every important panel in Locality I are paintings with V/W-infill, so the CMP-style is present everywhere in Locality I. Those panels provide indications as to the probable order of use of the different painting zones. Only in the "main rock shelter" of Locality I (ASI R.C. 2) works of various older artistic traditions are present. It is therefore probable that the CMP-style will also have started in the "main rock shelter" and that its oldest work can be found in this same "main rock shelter". The "master ceiling" (ASI R.C. 17) which seems to have been used somewhat later, probably when other panels have been filled up, also gives all kinds of subtle clues as to the order of use.

All the rock art in Locality I has been studied in detail and labelled before 2013. It has been published at above date (Schaap, 2013, 2015) and has been tagged more recently by the Archaeological Service of India as ASI R.C. 1 to 18.

Initially, during the first phase or the so-called "White Period" a uniform white decoration was present, the so-called strict CMP-style, consisting of numerous paintings with V/W-infill occurring all over Locality I, and white paintings in various substyles are present everywhere in the lower strata of the stratigraphies with CMP-style paintings in Locality I. Moreover, the "master ceiling" was completely outfitted with white paintings. In addition to this, a few rare cases of several paintings with horizontal lines are also present in conjunction with V/W-infill paintings.

## **The seven infill traditions in the front panels of the “main rock shelter” (ASI R.C. 2)**

The front panels of the "main rock shelter" (ASI R.C. 2) of Locality I present: 1) V/W-infill (CMP-style), 2) horizontal lines infill (in conjunction with CMP-style), 3) herringbone infill, 4) zigzag infill, 5) inversion of the infill (M-shape), 6) vertical lines infill, 7) cross-hatched infill. In some localities in other areas, it is as if in the same panel, different infill types with rectangular core were used simultaneously.

### **Increased use of a locality leads to decreasing size of the paintings**

V/W-infill is synonymous with CMP-style, and the red cross-hatched infill in Locality I should be seen as the most recent of these seven infill types. As mentioned before, decreasing size of the paintings could also be observed. This remarkable miniaturising process applies both to the CMP-style and virtually to all the other subsequent superimposing artistic traditions in Locality I. A rule of thumb is therefore, that increasing use of a locality leads to decreasing size of paintings.

“The tracing of origin and development, sequencing and mutual relation between these seven infill types plus their variants and ramifications, are fascinating though complex problems. The more we learn about the age of the respective infill types, the more infill trends will probably be officially described in the future. The form language consisting of rectangular figures covers a larger area in Central India and is not restricted to Central Madhya Pradesh.” (Schaap, 2018).

### **Problematising the two-coloured paintings in the CMP-style**

In many publications on Indian rock art, the existence and presence of two-coloured paintings are simply mentioned and enumerated, bereft of any valid stylistic arguments. Though the order of production is not problematised consistently, or in other words questioning if the two separate colour layers are of the same period of creation, it represents a relevant research problem that might have gone mostly unnoticed.

Also, in the CMP-style red additional lines superimpose white lines in many cases. The red lines are drawn side by side with or on top of the white lines, and it should be stressed that red lines are never underneath the white ones. Sometimes the red lines copy and follow the white lines precisely, in many cases, however, they do not copy correctly. That is, often these additional red lines do not follow the authentic CMP-style white lines and are added in an astonishingly careless way. So, several shortcomings in the complementary red part make it doubtful if the intention were to create two-coloured paintings right from the start. Sometimes the somewhat schematically looking additions are nothing but poor and uninspired copies of the white lines with red ones drawn on top. A few times, because of some unknown reason, the copier misunderstood the original depiction completely! Therefore it is highly doubtful that white and red lines are produced at the same time and by the same people.

Concerning the pigment composition, Ota (2012) in a Raman spectroscopy analysis of rock paintings in Bhimbetika mentions the presence of calcite, hematite, gypsum, whewellite, and goethite. Evidence of the presence of an organic binder is also found, and probably these formulae also apply to Locality I.

### **The dating of the CMP-style rock paintings**

The two <sup>14</sup>C AMS dating's by Watchman and Roberts (2005) (OZG 370) during the EIP project in 2005, also seem to indicate different production moments (Kumar et al., 2005).

The two colour components: white (4810 ± 370 years BP) of the underlying white painting, and red (2780 ± 40 years BP) of the red superimposing lines of the same atypical two-coloured painting in which a rhinoceros is depicted, suggest a 2000 years' time lapse. After Kumar (2005): "These two results indicate that the first painting was white, and later addition of red was used to outline and decorate the body." Is the 2000 years' time difference the result of a dating error, or are we witnessing a replication phenomenon or a situation of style revival?

### **The white paintings as the starting point**

All the two-coloured paintings in Locality I always have a white painting as a starting point, and without any doubt, initially, we have to do with white paintings here. Since the two-coloured paintings are adapted white paintings, shape and position of two-coloured paintings are determined, fixed and limited by the shape and position of the originally underlying white paintings. Any discussion about the two-coloured paintings must take this point, a crucial one, into consideration. Furthermore, until now, we have not come upon a clear-cut stratigraphy concerning the sequence of the two-coloured versus red paintings. The underlying white paintings in two-coloured works do not differ from the non-adapted white paintings. Nearly all the panels contain white paintings and many of them are in all white, without any additional red lines. Especially important and significant in the discussion about the sequence is that paintings with other infill types never superimpose two-coloured paintings. The white paintings appear to be refashioned in two-coloured ones only in case they were not superimposed by work with herringbone-, zigzag-, vertical lines infill, inversion of the infill (M-shape) or cross-hatched infill. In retrospect, they could only be refashioned with red into two-coloured ones when not superimposed (Schaap, 2018).

On the "master ceiling" (ASI R.C. 17), in the studied area, there are only two-coloured paintings, one white painting and two red paintings with V/W-infill and two with red dots infill. On the "master ceiling" there are also no superpositions, only juxtapositions.

### **Locality I as the type-site of the CMP-style rock paintings**

The type-site of the CMP-style, viz. Locality I, discovered in 1956, is one of the most crucial multicultural open-air rock art sites in India and provides a unique opportunity to examine many relevant rock art research problems. It has numerous clusters of overlapping paintings and lengthy sequences of rock paintings with important superimpositions extending over thousands of years. They have a potential to generate significant stratigraphic sequences.

With stratigraphy as the starting point, superimposition and style are used as the fundamentals for relative dating. Because of the lack of archaeological fieldwork, we do ignore whether Locality I was a temporary foraging campsite (hunting-gathering-fishing) of “forest-based hunting-gathering and foraging nomads” (Chakraverty, 2009), or a long-term residential locality of these shelter-dwellers. However, the numerous paintings with V/W-infill in all the areas in Locality I suggest, a long-term, probably residential use, or maybe sometimes at least. Monsoon-related periods of fishing is also a probability. Though apart from some microliths, other objects enabling contextualisation are not yet available, exfoliated parts of parietal panels are also absent.

The occurrence and presence of a certain amount of different artistic traditions in superimposing sequences, and the existence of numerous areas with CMP-style, point to a substantial period of use and to a period of intensive use of Locality I. There are some twenty areas with relevant CMP-style panels in Locality I, indicating a significant time-depth instead of a sudden creative explosion. This sometimes suggests long-term cyclical artistic activity, intensive use and progressive humanisation of the site. Locality I (ASI R.C.) is unique in that it is the only locality that is wholly bedecked with CMP-style paintings. It also has the most remarkable diversity as well as the best-preserved paintings. Furthermore, it is provided with the most detailed painting stratigraphy. The “main rock shelter” (ASI R.C. 2) with particular acoustic properties and an excellent lookout for shelter-dwellers, represents the essential multi-tradition area of Locality I.

### **Reference panel “side panel” (ASI R.C. 2) versus the “main rock shelter” (ASI R.C. 17)**

The results of the earlier analysis of the “side panel” of the “main rock shelter” (ASI R.C. 2), especially those concerning the spatial distribution and area-availability-and-use-pattern resulting in a fine-grained and articulated relative stylistic chronology, were taken as starting point, i.e. the reference panel, for our actual analysis of the grandiose decorated large canopy-type “master ceiling” (ASI R.C. 17) (Schaap, 2018). As specified before, this spatial distribution formula suggests that the first creators of the “side panel” started with a well-balanced distribution of the paintings in several series or registers. One first took up the most appropriate space and used only later the remaining and less suitable space. The “side panel” and “master ceiling” are unambiguously stylistically linked, the “side panel” came first and some substyles on the “master ceiling” are of a somewhat later date.

### **The prerequisites and limitations**

The “master ceiling”, located in a so-called “open tiger reserve”, is a dangerous place due to the presence of substantial bee colonies of the so-called “giant rock bee” (*Apis dorsata*) on the “master ceiling” and in the immediate vicinity (see: Youtube: *Apis dorsata*). One can stay here only a few minutes at most, and then one person only, to avoid an attack by a swarm consisting of numerous aggressive large bees. Therefore, on-site research concerning the “master ceiling” is hardly possible and best done with photographic material in safer surroundings. Picture taking is hindered by dense vegetation, consisting of a cluster of large trees directly underneath the “master ceiling”, and leaves touching the ceiling. Reckless tree

felling is not appreciated by the local people and owners of the site. GigaPan photography or DStretch digital enhance applications have not been used, as this results in an enormous and often superfluous increase of material (Schaap, 2015).

### **The platforms and scaffolding**

"The "master ceiling" high above the head in a very inconvenient place, can only safely be reached by using trees or long ladders with scaffolding (Schaap, 2013, 2015). The "master ceiling" is approximately horizontal and the transition area near the vertical wall has a semi-circular structure. The paintings are distributed over the uneven surface of this ceiling. To be able to paint this high and large overhang properly, the makers undoubtedly needed a sizeable stable work floor, accessible via a tree, ladder, scaffolding or otherwise. They had to use a platform that was both long and wide enough. The artists must have worked either above their heads standing on a human-made platform in a cramped position or close up on their backs lying supine under the rooftop but with sufficient room to manoeuvre, to be able to make these often more extended series of paintings that sometimes cover the entire width of this "master ceiling". The work floor must have been sufficiently stable, long, and wide and the supporting scaffolding sturdy and durable. The high technical quality of some of the paintings indicates that they disposed of adequate equipment. The current location of the paintings makes it even possible to reconstruct the form and boundaries of this work floor, considering the "champ manuel" of the artists. Everything indicates that the "master ceiling" up to and including the edges was almost entirely used, and within the limited space of it, few or hardly any zones were left unused. The entire canopy was painted at all costs. It is not clear whether others have also made use of the scaffolds possibly left behind. It may seem obvious that the scaffolding was removed after the paintings had been applied. However, some of the twenty remaining paintings of seemingly other artistic traditions seem to challenge this conclusion.

### **The 80 animal representations in the CMP-style with V/W-infill on the "master ceiling"**

Through an in-depth analysis using a multi-faceted style-oriented approach, 80 CMP-style paintings in the "master ceiling" (ASI R.C. 17) of Locality I (ASI R.C.) have been investigated. This resulted in a series of at least eight different and distinct substyles of the CMP-style. Besides familiarity, commonality and undercurrents of the same order of taste, all these creative performances also reveal internal stylistic variety. The decoration of the "master ceiling" should not be considered as an all-encompassing, coherent monumental composition. On the contrary, each register presents another quite different, substyle.

### **The stylistic analysis of the "master ceiling" is focused on the deer images**

Considering the dominance of deer in two-coloured paintings, i.e. adapted white paintings, on the "master ceiling", and in line with its problem-oriented approach, this stylistic analysis is therefore primarily focused on the deer pictures.

On the "master ceiling" are three depictions of humans, in the immediate context of CMP-style paintings. "They lack, however, specific elements that permit an attribution to the

CMP-style. Sometimes the stylistic differences between human versus animal depictions in, or in context of, the CMP-style are more important than the stylistic differences between human depictions in, or in context of, the CMP-style and other artistic traditions. Because of this inter-style similarity, human depictions are useless as a stylistic marker." (Schaap, 2017).

### **The two-coloured paintings are adapted CMP-style white paintings with V/W-infill**

Most of the 80 CMP-style paintings on the "master ceiling" (ASI R.C. 17) are nowadays two-coloured, though initially, during the "White Period", they were all in white. In a subsequent phase, an additional red infill consisting of V/W-infill often with a vertical centre line plus various additional red lines were superimposed on the white paintings. This often changed the painting entirely. It is a conundrum who, when and why red lines were added. This is probably to be considered as a replication phenomenon or act of rejuvenation, and here each painting has its history. In the substyle analysis, it is essential to distinguish between the white initial, authentic, CMP-style paintings and the later two-coloured paintings with additional red complementary lines. Unfortunately, the underlying, originally white and usually heavy pasted, paintings are often poorly preserved. Therefore, the actual stylistic analysis of the two-coloured paintings concentrated inevitably on the well-preserved red overlying lines. It is, however, sometimes forgotten that the actual image obtained from the CMP-style phenomenon is strongly influenced, determined, even distorted and deformed by the superimposed red re-outlining of unknown origin and age!

### **A substyle reflects the performances of a specific master as an adopter of the CMP-style**

On the "master ceiling" (ASI R.C. 17) are a dozen registers or series with paintings, and each register often presents a distinct CMP-substyle, herewith concretising my research problem, i.e. distinguishing substyles. A substyle probably reflects the creative performances of a specific master as an adopter of the CMP-style. Therefore, the entire decoration of the "master ceiling" with its numerous distinct substyles might represent the work of many individuals, all adopters of the CMP-style. This could hint at a gradual periodical production during a substantial period of creation by various leader adopters and their followers, instead of massive production or a momentary creative explosion during a limited period of creation. The CMP-style also seems to have been spread over a longer period of time. Some of these masters were also active on other panels in Locality I and even in other open-air rock art loci such as Locality 2, thereby providing a fascinating insight into the range of action of some perpetrators of the CMP-style. This applies for example to some work depicting the impressive Gaur bovid (*Bos gaurus*) that has an extra-wide massive pasted white ducked S-shape dorsal line as important diagnostic trait. That is why we tend to attribute work in different localities to one specific master. Although there are numerous white paintings with bovids in the CMP-style, in the white paintings in the "main rock shelter" (ASI R.C. 2) the emphasis is on depictions of deer. However, in the superimposing red paintings in the CMP-style, there is more emphasis on larger, bovid-like, animals. This shift in animal species could be of some help in the sequencing of the paintings on the "master ceiling". The 6th register with bovid, probably Gaur for instance, is therefore perhaps of somewhat later production. The earlier date of

production of the white paintings of deer, in the "main rock shelter", has been established on irrefutable stratigraphies and as further suggested, also based on distribution and topography.

Especially in deer drawings, the emphasis is on rendering a strictly rectangular core and outline. Except for the neck, some experimenting and artistic license is manifested in picturing an exceedingly long and gracile swan-neck, often vertical but rarely in a bent position. The embellishment of the antlers should also be mentioned.

### **The formal and stylistic analysis and the artistic license**

Those swan-neck deer paintings demonstrate an exciting problem in style research, that is, did the artists have a long-neck species of deer in mind or should the long necks be considered as an artistic license. However, both conditions can be subjected to formal and stylistic analysis.

### **The substyles with broad outlines in white stripes are specific to the "master ceiling"**

Another stylistic element is the frequent and more emphatic use of broad, usually white stripes of varying width as contours. They surround the rectangular core of the representation with V/W-infill and are whether or not supplemented with red contours on the inside and or outside or also with a red longitudinal line over the middle of the broad white stripe. The straight abdominal line is more often provided with extra lines than the rest of the body. Sometimes the white stripe with double red lines is only present at the abdomen. On the "master ceiling", this particular way of outlining has developed into several attractive substyles. Such substyles with medium-sized two-coloured paintings with V/W-infill and a wider white stripe as outline are frequently present here. The white stripe, which is in fact an unusually broad outline or contour line, gives a special cachet to the paintings in question. Many of the eighty animal figures have such a broad white stripe. This group of unique substyles with a broad white stripe as the outline is therefore specific to the "master ceiling". There are two variable elements: 1) the width of the white stripe; 2) the shape and degree of the red outline of the white stripe. The visual effect of this outline is variable. The perception of the width of the white stripe depends mainly on the dimensions and proportions of the representations, and there is no absolute standard as to this point.

This remarkable style of paintings with the outline in broad white stripes and with gracile necks is very dominant on the 8th register with painting No. 55 as the absolute masterpiece. In this attractive series, this long and slender neck is now represented somewhat forwardly angled. Think of the example of a slightly angled goose- or swan-neck. Also, worth mentioning are the three paintings with a) high upright head, b) strikingly bright white neckline supplemented with, c) red longitudinal stripes over the middle plus, d) the short tapering red stripe towards the muzzle placed on the head at the level of the jaws from the series of seven deer on the 10th register. One of the most beautiful paintings here is No. 65. Most of the space, however, is occupied by the attractive "series of eight deer" on the 5th register with their emphasis on the antlers.

### **Individual versus collective work**

Some stylistic elements within the series of paintings suggest that sometimes, the work may collectively been performed, possibly with a "specialist" for specific details. This makes it challenging to trace the authorship and substyle back to a particular master or leading artist. There are also several remarkable stylistic differences, some of which are interesting and somewhat unusual. So, here are some paintings that stylistically differ from what is available in for example the reference "side panel". Apart from deviating stylistic elements, there are also several stylistic similarities, parallels, relations and connections with work in other rock shelters in Locality I and other localities, such as Locality 2. Finally, there is an unusual subject for the CMP-style, namely the small Muntjac deer (*Muntiacus muntjak*) in the fine painting No. 31 on the 4th register. All these elements, aspects and qualities justified an extensive examination of the "master ceiling".

### **The stylistic characteristics**

Special stylistic features are: 1) broad white outline (frequent); 2) short red stripes (frequent); vertical or diagonal red lines in series to indicate contours, neck, head, or legs; other red longitudinal lines over the middle; as well as red I and T-shaped infill of the legs. The short red lines are incorporated into limbs ("segmentation") and into contours (horizontal, vertical, diagonal), or function as a replacement of the outline and the contour line is then omitted.

Red lines are also applied in essential panels of the "main rock shelter", for example in "side panel" in Locality I. The use of short red lines links "master ceiling" in Locality I with Locality 2 and Locality 3. Short red lines are also present in other infill traditions and perhaps stem from those traditions. There is horizontal line infill (exceptional), and there are rectangles in the hind part (frequent). The contour lines vary from angular (very frequent) to equilibrated, to supple organic or elongated fluid forms (exceptional).

### **Juxtaposition and the "spatial distribution and area-availability-and-use-pattern" formulae**

Also, on the "master ceiling", avoiding biased terminology as "decorate" or "decorating", we see the same urge to cover the rock wall as much as possible with paintings. There was a need, obviously tradition-bound, to paint the entire wall at all cost. The horror vacui principle is therefore not limited to the V/W-infill of the CMP-style paintings and it also extends to complete rock walls. Because the CMP-style artists do not superimpose their work, there are, as mentioned before, hardly any stratigraphies. There is exclusively juxtaposition but no superposition. The order of the paintings should, therefore, be extrapolated differently. This problematic situation led to our spatial distribution and area-availability-and-use-pattern formula. Besides this, there is another phenomenon, in that paintings at the edge of a panel or a limited space situation sometimes differ from the adjacent ones. So, after a well-balanced series of paintings had been set up, another painting was placed in the limited remaining space at a later point in time. Paintings at the edge of a panel are often subject to considerable erosion and were replaced by other ones. Irrefutable examples of this

phenomenon are the paintings with red dots infill instead of V/W-infill. Such paintings are only found to a limited extent and even then only at the edge of a panel. This led to an extension of the spatial distribution and area-availability-and-use-pattern formula. It represents a useful indication regarding the order of application, in that paintings at the edge of a panel are sometimes of a later date. The red dots infill appears to be later than the V/W-infill. It is likely that the reference "side panel" was put into use earlier than the "master ceiling", though we ignore the time interval between red dots infill and V/W-infill. However, it is also clear that both "side panel" and "master ceiling" were simultaneously in use at a later point in time and not one after the other.

### **The style concept and the uniformity of a style**

Lützeler (1975) remembers that: 1) the uniformity of style is an illusion, because distance in time obscures differences; 2) a style concept is more applicable to standard and traditional work than to high-quality work; 3) style continuity is often more accurately represented by an average artist than the "great artist".

### **Description of the 13 registers on the "master ceiling"**

#### **1st register No. 1 to 9**

The substyle analysis of the 1st register is primarily based on the study of the initially white paintings as the disturbing red additions are of relatively minor importance here. Often in other registers, the white paintings have been changed considerably by red additions. Except for the additional red lines superimposing the white paintings and the intermingled representations of a deer and a human, there is no inter-figure superimposition in the 1st register.

On the 1st register, there are eight animal representations, four (two-coloured) ones of about the same size, two small (red coloured) ones, an unusually large one (two-coloured), plus a fragment of an animal figure and a white human representation (No. 1-9). Two figures, consisting of a two-coloured and a red one, are facing right. Another one is depicted in front or three-quarter view and six figures, composed of four two-coloured plus a fragment and a red one red, facing left. All the work on this 1st register is unmistakably based on white paintings. The paintings in this 1st register are not provided with extra-wide white strips as contours and thus fit with the technique of the smaller paintings on the reference "side panel" in the "main rock shelter" (ASI R.C. 2). All the two-coloured paintings, except for one (No. 9), interpreted indifferently as deer depictions, have a long vertical and slender gracile neck, a detailed and small head with subtle details like ears and hair as diagnostic features. All of them, except for one have slim long straight legs. On the reference "side panel" this type of work is, according to the argument spatial distribution, of a slightly later type that follows the larger white one. This tendency to depict a vertical neck is especially visible in smaller paintings in lower registers on the reference "side panel". So, the lack of extra-wide white strips as contours plus the very long vertical neck with detailed head both point to the smaller paintings in the lower registers on the reference "side panel". According to the spatial distribution and

area-availability-and-use-pattern, these are to be seen as of a somewhat later production. On the reference "side panel" however, are two types of smaller two-coloured paintings: some small, pale red paintings and some more recent redder paintings with a more careful red outlining. We are not aware of such a subtle colour difference on the "master ceiling". Therefore, this work on the 1st register should not necessarily be considered as the first work on the "master ceiling". From this point of view, this 1st register probably does not constitute the very first beginning of the decoration of the "master ceiling". Possibly they started to adorn the ceiling in a somewhat higher register number. However, the research goal here is to distinguish substyles and not the reconstruction of the order of production.

Initially, there must have been five deer representations (No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 7) of the same size with the same stylistic characteristics. The four remaining deer paintings (No. 1, 3, 4, 7) should perhaps be considered as part of, or form, a composition. Deer painting No. 1 directed to the right is possibly added to the series of four left-oriented deer paintings afterwards, as tradition seems to describe that paintings had to be oriented in the same direction. The multiple dispersed traces and stains of red colour in the area around No. 3 and No. 4 are probably remnants of the additional red outline of these two deer paintings, or perhaps of fragmented superimposing red paintings, damaged by nearby trees directly underneath the canopy.

The 1st register is also one of the few registers in which a human representation (No. 5) occurs. This human representation may also be part of the composition mentioned above with four, initially five, deer depictions. The head of deer painting No. 4, resembling a bird's head, has not been reworked with red and therefore an attractive head with subtle details like ears and hair appears. Its hind leg is slanted backwards. This painting No. 4 is the least reworked and disfigured in the 1st register, and therefore the most representative of this series of attractive deer paintings with a remarkably consistent stylistic unity. We consider painting No. 4 in the 1st register to be a very typical example of a substyle, consisting of paintings No. 1, 3, 4 and 7.

Then there is this remarkable white human representation (No. 5), which is the only and unique painting on the "master ceiling" left entirely white. To the right of this human representation was originally some space without painting. Next is a fine, predominantly white, picture of a deer (No. 7) facing left, with the same stylistic characteristics as the three paintings (No. 1, 3, 4) plus fragment (No. 2) mentioned before. At a later stage, between the white human representation (No. 5) and the above mentioned deer (No. 7), a much smaller, predominantly red, deer painting with V/W-infill facing to the right (No. 6) was apparently with some difficulty depicted in the remaining space. Underneath red painting No. 6, white traces are visible, remnants perhaps of an abdominal line. Since there was little space available between the two originally white deer paintings (No. 4, 7), it seems to have been necessary to make any subsequent representation smaller and not to use the same baseline. The small, considerably redder painting to the right (No. 6) also stands with its hind legs almost against the white human representation (No. 5) and with the head virtually against the adjacent animal representation (No. 7) flanking to the right. Such a tight positioning, with paintings nearly touching each other, is exceptional in the CMP-style. It suggests that the smaller red

painting (No. 6) must be of a later date than the three flanking paintings of a human (No. 5) and two deer (No. 4, 7) between which the small red one was placed. Apart from being red and smaller, its stylistic characteristics are also entirely different from the white flanking paintings. To the right and somewhat lower of the two-coloured painting (No. 7), is a small and faded red painting (No. 8), facing left. Stylistically it resembles the small red painting (No. 6). So, both red paintings (No. 6, 8) have probably been added later, i.e. after the white paintings (No. 1, (2), 3, 4, 5, 7) and again, both red paintings are probably attributable to the same individual. Also, the spatial distribution of the 1st register confirms this white followed by red painted (No. 6 and perhaps No. 8) order of succession. Until now it remains unknown, whether the small red paintings (No. 6 and No. 8) were made at the time when the flanking paintings were only white, or if the two, plus the remaining, originally white animal representations had already been provided with superimposing red additions as part of a replication process.

Then to the far right, placed in the margin, is a large white animal stylistically different figure with angular shapes, facing to the left (No. 9), plus, scattered traces and stains of white paint around this large painting. This striking painting together with the tiger picture (No. 48) on the 7th register and the elephant picture (No. 75) on the 11th register is the largest of the entire "master ceiling". This predominantly white depiction (No. 9) has ditto V/W-infill with perhaps a rectangle at the hind. Contrary to the legs the head and neck are well-fitted, white hairs are shown on the head, and especially on top of the V/W-infill red additions are also visible. At the height of the head, but no more connected to it, a curved and considerably redder line, probably remains of an antler, is visible. Perhaps the individual who added red to this white painting interpreted it as a representation of a deer. Apart from its exceptional size, this painting is remarkable in several respects, because it is one of the few paintings that is placed in the margin, i.e. outside the right ridge near the edge of the ceiling. Because of its excessive size in this context, this less common type of representation with somewhat horse- or bovid-like body and zebra-like patterns on head and neck, can be understood either as an early example of white work from the "White Period" or as later work. Such later work with V/W-infill consisting of heavily emphasised white paintings of larger dimensions occurs in an intricate diachronic infill-type and chromatic stratigraphy. It superimposes in front panels of the "main rock shelter" (ASI R.C. 2) some red paintings with herringbone or zigzag infill. Despite its poorly presented legs, this representation (No. 9) makes quite a well preserved impression and its placement at the edge of the ceiling is, therefore, more in favour of a later production date. At the same time, its placement nearby the vertical rock face, within easy reach with a ladder or a tree, does not contradict an early production date. There are traces and stains of white paint all over the area near and underneath this painting as if they were trying to erase something...

In the CMP-style the antlers are in side view, front view or three-quarter profile. They are variably stylised and an element to which much attention was paid, also on the "master ceiling". Though, the antlers in the 1st register are in strict profile, highly stylised, with all details omitted, the embellishment of the antlers does not apply to the deer paintings in the 1st register. Therefore, this represents a relevant stylistic difference.

The deer are sometimes depicted in characteristic poses. In painting No. 3 for instance, the animal shows its throat as if expressing dominance. However, it is often challenging to discern specific ethological aspects in the depictions.

The red additions in overpainting of all the two-coloured paintings in the 1st register are seen as clear and convincing examples of an additive process, viz. replication.

## **2nd register No. 10 to 19**

In the 1st register, the substyle analysis was on features of the initially white paintings, as the red additions were of relatively minor importance. The actual substyle analysis of the 2nd register, however, is based on the study of the well-preserved two-coloured paintings and not on the poorly preserved white paintings. In the 2nd register, the red overpainting is often much more dominant, and the substyle analysis applies therefore explicitly to the more visible reddish two-coloured version.

There are ten representations of deer, all facing right (No. 10 to 19). These paintings, like those in the 1st register, do not show extra wide white strips as contours or outlines. Consequently they fit with the technique of the smaller paintings on the reference "side panel" in the "main rock shelter". In most of the figures in this 2nd register, the outline of "side panel" type "series two" and "series three" were applied. The first striking difference between the 1st and second register is that the necks in the 2nd register often show more natural proportions.

The leftmost and first painting (No. 10) has about the same bright red colour intensity and similar forceful execution of zebra-like patterning infill as three paintings on the left side of the 3rd register (No. 20, 21, 22). Therefore, these four paintings seem stylistically closely related and qua distribution clearly appear to belong together. The diagnostic features are a V/W-infill with very striking, long parallel red stripes at the front producing a zebra-like effect. This pattern is obtained by starting two to four parallel lines at the top of the backline, approximately in the middle, which then continue towards the left foreleg. This way of filling up occurs in several paintings in this zone and is therefore clearly recognizable as a substyle in both the 2nd and the 3rd register. This zebra patterning tendency is present, often subdued, in several other paintings in this and nearby registers, and is sometimes copied from the underlying white paintings. Most of this work with zebra patterning has to be attributed to the same individual and is to be considered as a substyle.

Besides similarities there are also differences, for example, the convex legs of No. 10 on this 2nd register are somewhat clumsy compared to the slim fine legs of No. 20, 21, 22 on the 3rd register. Also, the neck is presented differently, i.e. shorter, and more massive and more in line with the horizontal contour of the back versus a long and slim neck presented in a more diagonal position in the No. 20, 21, 22 series. The apparent stylistic similarity in a subgroup as No. 10 plus No. 20, 21, 22 in the 3rd register, is the outcome of the red additional overpainting. In this case, the overpainting constitutes an attractive new artistic interpretation.

Let us then consider the two paintings (No. 11, 12), which are slightly less red than the first one on the left. Especially in the left painting (No. 11) of the two, much white of the underlying original painting is still visible. In the second painting (No. 12), less white was retained, and another difference is that the legs were not indicated by the usual contour lines but are only suggested by short red horizontal or slightly diagonal red stripes. As in the 1st register, both animals also have a relatively long neck and keep the head high.

Next, there is a series of four relatively simple reworked paintings (No. 13 to 16) with a long slender neck, of which it was clear from the outset that white paintings were again the starting point. These paintings make a predominantly white impression, and fortunately, the red additions are not particularly dominant. They are also, stylistically different from the paintings as mentioned above. In painting No. 15, the white neck has been emphasized with short red lines and especially painting No. 16 has been disfigured by careless reworking. This type of disappointing superimposed red supplementing is also manifestly present outside the "master ceiling" in the neighbouring panel (ASI R.C. 18) underneath the "master ceiling". Here it suspiciously resembles the blanket-like covers in historical horse pictures! All these four paintings, forming a subgroup inside the 2nd register, have short horizontal red stripes on the nearly vertical neck. The outline consists of a narrow white strip bordered with red or "side panel" outline type "first series".

The next three paintings (No. 17, 18, 19) have a considerably redder appearance than the previous ones. Yet, the white painting is still clearly visible, especially in the back section. This type of redder paintings is often technically better executed, the head of painting No. 17 and the legs of this series of three paintings are therefore more attractive than the carelessly supplemented white one. As in the reference "side panel", the similarity here is very interesting. The redder two-coloured paintings are of better quality, which might suggest that the work above on the "master ceiling" and the "side panel" are perhaps contemporaneous.

In paintings No. 17 and 18, a white vertical line of the rear section was used in such a way that a two-coloured rectangle was created by adding an extra red vertical line parallel to the left and right. This artistic convention of a rectangle in the hindquarter frequently occurs in some representations of deer. It is as if the hind part of the animal is puffed up and presented from the back instead of in profile. Such rectangular compartments in some substyles were used quite generally in white, two-coloured, and red work. This non-specific element, therefore, has only limited diagnostic value in determining the order of sequence. Despite the many stylistic similarities and relations between "master ceiling" (ASI R.C. 17) and the reference "side panel" in the "main rock shelter" (ASI R.C. 2), it should be emphasized that all the fifty paintings on the "side panel" manifestly lack such a rectangular compartment in the hindquarter. This noteworthy absence of rectangles in the hindquarter represents an intriguing difference with the "master ceiling" and is perhaps a time-bound element.

In this 2nd register, there is considerable internal stylistic diversity. There is much more variety than in the 1st register, and the content of the 2nd register is not synonymous with one specific substyle. Painting No. 10 represents an example of the most apparent substyle, together with paintings No. 20, 21, 22 in the adjacent area in the 3rd register.

### 3rd register No. 20 to 28

The 3rd register begins to the left, a little further on. There are, again as in the 2nd register, ten representations of deer, all facing right (No. 20 to 29), including eight with V/W-infill and two exceptionally with horizontal line infill (No. 27 and 28).

The beginning of the natural horizontal ledge is on the left. Some of the paintings from this 3rd, second and first register seem to have used a few parts of this ledge as a baseline, or at least to have taken it into account. In this zone, two baselines can now be distinguished: the usual horizontal baselines parallel to the other registers, and then a second baseline facing the natural horizontal ledge. This clarification is essential for a correct understanding of the arrangement and grouping of paintings with specific stylistic characteristics.

Important in the 3rd register is the use of large numbers of short vertical red stripes, a phenomenon with more extensive distribution in Locality I. Especially in its area of influence, there is also the zebra patterning mentioned above and the exceptional presence of two paintings with horizontal line infill.

The first three paintings on the left (No. 20, 21, 22), display the zebra-like effect described in the 2nd register. In these attractive paintings No. 20 and in particular No. 21, large numbers of short red stripes have been used. This remarkable way of shaping and a fashion is, as mentioned before, often used in the two-coloured phase in other localities such as Locality 3 and especially Locality 2. There, very surprisingly, we come across painted zones teeming with short vertical, often strikingly bright red stripes: a phenomenon described earlier by me "as if applied in a trance". The white pasty paint of the underlying white paintings, on the other hand, has often largely disappeared. The left and middle ones of the three paintings (No. 20, 21) did not require a full red outline. Only the back part shows this red outline, the contour being constituted by a series of shorter or longer vertical red lines. In the middle painting (No. 21) the neck is only suggested by a series of five short vertical red stripes. However, the right one of the three paintings (No. 22) only has a contour line and no such short red lines. The abdominal part of this third representation consists of remnants of the underlying white painting. These three paintings are not uniform.

The next painting (No. 23) is also a reworked angular white painting, of which the white contour and especially the backline is still visible. Again, no effort has been made to apply a red contour line. Separate short lines and lines of the V/W-infill suggest a somewhat hairy streaky backline. The same technique was applied to the summarily indicated head and front legs. The next three paintings (No. 24, 25, 26) consist of white work supplemented to a greater or lesser extent by red. In the first one (No. 24), the white contour line is complemented with a thin red line, in the second one (No. 25), the backline is left white and short vertical red lines are superposed on the white contour line. In the third one (No. 26), the original white painting has been well preserved, and there are few red additions. Just like the previous ones, these paintings are not uniform.

Thereafter, there are two exceptional paintings (No. 27, 28) that stand out because of their long horizontal stripes infill, the only ones with horizontal stripes infill on the "master ceiling". The first painting (No. 27) makes a predominantly red impression. Only in a few instances, the white horizontal line infill is still visible, and the painting in its present form appears to have been rather carelessly executed. It has three to four white partly covered horizontal stripes, and four red stripes and a red outline. The second painting (No. 28) stands out because of its sober execution, and here plenty of white colour is still visible in the backline. It has three red horizontal stripes apart from a white back plus a red outline. Animal paintings with horizontal line infill as No. 27 and 28 only occur in the context of V/W-infill, and even then only occasionally. Until now, in the area under study, this has never been noticed in connection with other types of infill. Perhaps, there are some in other areas or it is a code for a particular species of deer. The Axis deer (*Axis axis*), for example, has beautiful white dotted series on the flanks. With rapid movement, such dotted series can give the impression of white stripes. These two representations are the only ones (No. 27, 28) of the eighty paintings on the "master ceiling" with this type of infill. On the reference "side panel" with its fifty paintings, such a horizontal line infill is absent. In other panels as on the 'master ceiling' however, they are incidentally present. Also, these paintings with horizontal line infill are not provided with extra-wide white strips as contours.

Further on, to the right, is another deer representation (No. 29), which shows, as is usual with V/W-infill, a partly white backline with a red outline. To the right of it is a natural ledge. It seems as if one has wanted to avoid working past this ledge. Due to a lack of space, it seems that the hind legs were inclined more than usually forward. Nearby, in the 2nd register is also a deer representation with its legs placed in the same way (No. 17). Further on, to the right, is another deer representation (No. 29), it shows, as is usual with V/W-infill, partly a white backline with a red outline.

#### **4th register No. 30 to 32**

A little further on to the left, adjacent to painting No. 20 of the 3rd register, are three representations, facing right (No. 30, 31, 32), including one of deer (No. 30) and another one of a deer species that is not immediately identifiable. Judging from the shapes of the horns, this is probably the small muntjac deer (*Muntiacus muntjak*) (No. 31). If so, it belongs to the category of infrequent figures, at the same time it also belongs to the category of most attractive paintings of the "master ceiling". However, the legs of this "muntjac" are not depicted uniformly. The hind legs display a fine vertical red line and an unusual subtle detailing of a hoof, in line with the high quality of the depiction of the body. Its front legs on the contrary, have been spoiled by careless red additions. Next and finally, there is a depiction of an animal with compact shapes. Considering the general outline, this is probably a wild boar or a hyena (No. 32). These three paintings do not show extra wide white stripes as contours, are abundantly provided with red colour, and unmistakably belong to the reddest and most naturalistic work of the entire "master ceiling". All three of them have a red outline placed over the white one. This is most evident in the delicate middle painting with the "muntjac deer" (No. 31). The V/W-infill of the left and central deer painting (No. 30 and 31) resemble each other. The right depiction (No. 32) with compact shapes differs considerably.

This 4th register, consisting of only three paintings, is important because of its unusual variety of animal species, like deer, muntjac, boar or hyaena. Considering the quality and the exceptional naturalism of the depictions, these are probably not the work of an apprentice. Although these two-coloured paintings belong to the reddest of the "master ceiling", again, they are reworked white paintings and thus examples of replication.

### **5th register No. 33 to 40**

A little further on there is the 5th register with an unmistakably attractive series of eight representations of deer, facing left (No. 33 to 40). It is the second register with paintings facing left. A large part of this series evokes the idea of composition, showing a numerous herd of deer with a few large males provided with impressive highly ornate antlers. These paintings often display extra broad white stripes as contours and are striking because of the angularity of the depictions, the variation in representation and the elaboration of the V/W-infill. The superimposed red additions sometimes create a mosaic of spider-like red patterns that obscures the underlying white triangles (No. 36, 37, 38, 39). Compared to the "side panel" in the "main rock shelter", these eight paintings, except for two of them (No. 33) and (No. 40), can be considered as the "second series" in terms of the outline.

This attractive series of eight deer paintings is also remarkable for the diversity in the way it is depicted and, although they are all in V/W-infill, also for the variation in the specific elaboration of this red infill. Only two of them have approximately the same V/W-infill, while all the others have the superimposed red infills that consist of varying combinations of lines. This series of eight deer has probably been worked on by different individuals. Some of these different stylistic tendencies observed here in the 5th register seem to have crystallised even further in other series, as in the 10th register. In the 10th register somewhat farther on, there are the beautiful, tightly designed representations of deer, with a high head on a bright white neck, a red longitudinal line over the middle and a tapering red line on the head in the left side of this register. These depictions in the 10th register find their predecessor in, or are closely related to specific painting No. 40 of this 5th register. Also, the stylistic trait of oblique red lines we have seen before, is frequently present in paintings in other registers on the "master ceiling". It must be remembered that it is possible that this series, perhaps with the exception of No. 33 and No. 40, was intended to be seen as a composition, whereby No. 33 and No. 40 were probably added subsequently in the remaining restricted areas to the left and to the right.

The first painting (No. 33) (notice the deformation of this painting caused by the semi-circular structure of the concavity, part of the canopy) is very different from the next six to the right. At the same time, the eighth (No. 40) differs from the first and the six ones before (No. 34 to 39). The first painting (No. 33) and especially the eighth (No. 40) are technically the better ones. Apart from the infill, there are other differences: for example, all these paintings, again with exception of the first (No. 33) and the eighth (No. 40), also have oblique red lines in the white contour stripes. The first (No. 33) and the eighth (No. 40), on the other hand, have stylistic characteristics that differ from the paintings with these oblique red lines. So here we

see two tendencies: one trend-following line and another that emphasizes variation. Perhaps this may be considered to be a work by two or more individuals.

Of the eight representations, four are depicted with a long, rather heavily built, neck (No. 34, 35, 37, 40), different from the long and slim necks in the 1st register, and three of them with large antlers (No. 34, 35, 37). The three with large antlers have a relatively long neck and keep the head quite high, in contrast to the animals that are represented without antlers. In this case the neck is shorter, and the head is kept relatively low (36, 38, 39). Tails are shown upwards. All the deer belonging to this series of eight have an inflated hind part indicated by a stereotypical rectangular red compartment or a two-coloured (white-red) compartment.

### **6th register No. 41 to 46**

A little further on there is a series of six exceptionally diverse animal representations (No. 41 to 46), all facing right. First, note that the artists had to cope in this 6th register area with an improper surface, caused by exfoliation weathering.

This 6th register starts with a smaller painting with red spots or dots (No. 41), and judging by the long tail it probably depicts a leopard of which the legs are notably heavy. It is possible, even probable, that this painting was added later on in a remaining and restricted, left-over erosion-affected area, because the bumpy ceiling is unsuited to the left. Also, on the 7th register, there is an animal painting with an infill consisting of red dots or spots, which have probably been added later on. Apart from the tight placement, the way of depicting it differs significantly from the form used in the next adjacent paintings. Note also that the artist(s) scrupulously avoided overlapping of paintings of the nearby registers, especially the 5th register with painting No. 37.

Then, there are three well-preserved representations of Gaur or buffalo (No. 42, 43, 44), with outline type "second series". The wide white contour strip has red diagonal stripes. On two of them (No. 42, 43) a wide vertical red stripe is placed on all four legs, suggesting a T-shape, which produces a pleasing effect. In painting No. 42, the head is indicated, and the hair on the head shows that it should be the Gaur bovid rather than the buffalo. In painting No. 43 rock has flaked off and damaged the head. In the rightmost of the three (No. 44) no T-shaped infill was applied to the legs, but only a few short horizontal stripes ("segmenting") have been used on the legs. Slightly higher, undefined red colour remnants are still visible parallel to the backline.

Next, there are two representations of bovids, presumably Gaur, (No 45 and 46) with contour type "first series". Both these paintings, and also for example, painting No. 44, have an essential diagnostic trait, which is an extra-wide heavy-pasted white ducked S-shape dorsal line. At least one painting (No. 45), shows red horns as on the "side panel" in the "main rock shelter". In the second painting (No. 46), the head may perhaps not have remained entirely intact. In this work also, it is again very evident that these are white paintings which were then, sooner or later, supplemented with red details. Short red lines have been applied to the

dorsal line to suggest hairiness, so this detail is more reminiscent of an image of a bovid than a buffalo. These remarkably detailed paintings, which are left mainly white, are reminiscent of similar work on the right half of the "side panel". This type of image, consisting of 1) bovid subject, 2) a specific type of dorsal line (ducked S-shape), 3) white coloured (extra wide heavy pasted), 4) red horns, occurs besides the "master ceiling" and the "side panel" in Locality I also in other locations, for example in Locality 2 in a particularly carefully drawn version. This handful of paintings is distinguishable as a substyle and present in at least three different panels. These highly similar paintings seem to be produced by the same artist. Important is that there is a substantial distance between Locality I and Locality 2 which procures some insight in the range of action of this individual working in the tradition of the CMP-style, a type of information we welcome.

As mentioned before, there are numerous white paintings with bovids in the CMP-style. In the white paintings in the "main rock shelter", the emphasis is on depictions of deer, and in the superimposing red paintings, the emphasis is rather on larger, bovid-like, animals. This shift in animal species could be of some help in the sequencing of the paintings on the "master ceiling". Therefore, the 6th register is perhaps of somewhat later production. The earlier date of production of the white paintings of deer in the "main rock shelter" has been established based on irrefutable stratigraphies and based on suggestions about distribution and topography. Concerning the order of succession of the 6th register versus the 5th register, there is, unfortunately, no stratigraphy. Still, it is presumed, given the details of the legs, that the order of succession here is that the 5th register was produced first and then the 6th register.

### **7th register No. 47 to 51**

A little further on the left, there are three representations (No. 47, 48, 49) plus to the right, a remnant of a posterior part (No. 50) and a red rectangle (No. 51) presumably also the hind part of the body of an animal. The series of three starts on the left with a compact, stocky animal figure (No. 47) with heavy, stiff, oversized legs and filled in with red spots. This painting was probably added later. This picture can be read in two ways: that of a leopard or a hyena. A problem with the hyena interpretation is that it has an unmistakably longer tail, which is typical for a feline like a leopard. The dots are also not in favour of the Indian (yellow) striped hyena (*Hyaena hyaena*). This representation is very heavily shaped: the legs, especially the hind legs, are clumsy and hefty, and other details such as the long tail and the dots also suggest that it is a feline animal like a leopard (*Panthera pardus*). In principle, all the animals in the CMP-style have the same infill, regardless of their pelt, skin markings and colour, i.e. the V/W-infill, and they all have been executed in white, red, or two colours in the form of white plus red infill on top. Painting No. 47, has red spots as infill in the context of in the CMP-style with V/W-infill. However, the red spots infill is not a decisive element for species identification, and it is unclear what the relationship is between this red dots infill and the CMP-style. In the "central panel", at the front side in the "main rock shelter" (ASI R.C. 2), an animal painting is found which is problematic regarding the shape of its head, which has the V/W-infill instead of red spots. The similarity here is that there may likewise be doubts as about which animal was meant on the 'central panel'.

To the right of the leopard is a larger representation of a tiger (No. 48) with a long swaying tail and V/W-infill with many diagonal stripes. The wide white contour stripe is further provided with short vertical and diagonal lines and "second series" outline. As indicated previously in a discussion about two-coloured work (Schaap, 2017, 2018), this tiger has white claws, and in tracing the representation with red lines, this important detail and one of his most dangerous attributes was overlooked and therefore left white. To the right of this, another stocky animal figure is visible (No. 49), but now of standard dimensions and with the usual V/W-infill. There are no horns or antlers present, and it is unclear which animal was meant, perhaps a bear which is a scarce subject in the CMP-style. If so, maybe it is the Sloth Bear (*Melursus ursinus*). To the right of this is the posterior part of a damaged animal painting (No. 50) and finally to the right of this is a bright red rectangle visible (No. 51) as a fragment of the rectangular infill in the hindquarter of a deer. Whereas up to now the emphasis was on deer and bovid, this 7<sup>th</sup> register is the first one on the "master ceiling" with a variety of dangerous animals. However, the definite identification poses serious problems. Maybe they intended to depict the most dangerous animals: tiger, leopard, bear, and if so, the potential dangerousness of large sounders of wild boar is underestimated, the same applies to the impressive, dangerous, wild buffalo!

#### **8th register No. 52 to 56**

Slightly further, in this 8th register, there is a series of five attractive representations of deer (No. 52 to 56) with the head in standard or low position and sometimes with large detailed antlers. In these five works, the emphasis is very much on the expression of a long delicate gracile neck and particularly on the mobile character of the animal. In three of the five paintings, the antlers have been preserved, as if portrayed before the shedding process. These five attractive paintings of large, often antlered, males with slender necks are undoubtedly among the best artwork that the CMP-style has produced. Its masterly graphic treatment is the work of individuals with painterly talents.

Unfortunately, some paintings are strongly damaged by weathering, which makes comparison difficult. This 8th register contains only five paintings because the area further on the right is seriously damaged, possibly even when the "master ceiling" was in use.

There is also a difference in the position of the head between work on this 8th register and the registers farther away. Of the five paintings, three belong to the "first series" and two to the "second series" in terms of outlines with wide white stripes. Compared to some of the series still to be treated, some of these five paintings might therefore be a little earlier or at least represent a slightly older trend co-occurring with the other one. Of the five paintings, the first (No. 52), the second (No. 53) and the fifth (No. 56) have slender legs. The fourth (No. 55) possibly also, but the legs are severely damaged here. The third (No. 54), on the other hand, has more massive legs which corresponds to some paintings from the 10th register. Also, the bright white neck with a red longitudinal stripe in the middle connects the third (No. 54) with the three paintings (No. 64, 65, 66) with similar bright white neck and red longitudinal stripe in the 10th register. The most beautiful one with, a very slender neck in this series of five is found in this fourth and very attractive painting with fluid lines (No. 55). It is a painting

that might require much rehearsal. Unfortunately, in this smooth and graceful picture, a large part of the lower section of the body and the back has disappeared due to erosion.

The first (No. 52) and second painting (No. 53) have the same type of antlers that looks predominantly red. In the third picture (No. 54) with its long, bright white neck with a red longitudinal stripe across the middle, the antlers have the appearance of a bundle of tree branches with buds or budding leaves instead of deer antlers, and they are also less red than in the first (No. 52) and second painting (No. 53). On the neck of the first (No. 52) and second painting (No. 53) some short vertical stripes were applied. The same goes for the third (No. 54), where two short vertical lines overlap the red longitudinal stripes over the middle of the neck. Thus, the addition of two short vertical stripes is of a later date .

The legs of all these paintings show a short red horizontal stripe halfway ("segmenting"), except for the fifth (No. 56). Short red stripes have been placed on the red outline in the second painting (No. 53), to indicate hairiness, and white lines appear around head and neck in the third (No. 54) and fourth (No. 55).

The area on the right of the 8th register is seriously damaged. Despite these restrictions, the stylistic diversity in the 8th register is very striking, which suggests that we are dealing here with the work of several masters instead of a single one. In the present five paintings on the 8th register, there is considerably less emphasis on the rectangular core, and they look less compact and significantly less stocky than in some series already discussed on previous registers. We do not find here the usual sum of segments and elements, an imbalance present in much work of the CMP-style. The result is a much more harmoniously integrated whole; the result is also a more naturalistic looking painting with smooth lines. The successful combination of the sensitively rendered long gracile mobile neck, with the body and the subtle, wavy contour set out with powerful lines are the decisive design elements here. The origins of the CMP-style artistic tradition are not denied, as is visible in the underside of the representation with the straight horizontal abdominal line and the unchanged stiff straight legs. All these elements are typically conventional features that embody the essence of the form language of the CMP-style. The subtle integration of the neck and its wavy contour and of the back with the body is the innovative element here. At the same time, the stiff, angular underside of the painting remains conventional and betrays its CMP-style origins. Apart from this dichotomy, the final impression is one of animals in a compulsory forwardly driving movement, as in painting No. 55. The element of movement has not been mainly developed in the CMP-style, though in some white series in the "large rock shelter" (ASI R.C. 4) it is manifestly present. Apart from the expression of movement, there are no similarities between these series in "master ceiling" and ASI R.C. 4. The impetus to what has been called by us "segmenting the legs", applied here in the manner of V/W-infill, is repeated in the "main rock shelter" (ASI R.C. 2). It is present in some series with red zigzag infill on the "adjacent panel" in the transition zone with the "upper panel" in the "main rock shelter".

On the reference "side panel" in the "main rock shelter" there are beautiful white paintings of deer with red added outline lines of "the first series" type. They have already been discussed in detail (Schaap, 2017). The five attractive paintings No. 52 to 56 on the 8th register

on the "master ceiling" show similar shapes. There are certainly similarities, which may probably be referred to as relation. Perhaps these five paintings are a further development of the beautiful white paintings with added red outline lines in the "side panel". Unfortunately, no stratigraphy of these types of paintings has been found so far, let alone an unambiguous one, in which the relative order of such a development can be shown. Apart from the "side panel" there are other intriguing similarities, for example, in Locality 3, which is the area of influence of Locality I. In the large "Red rock shelter" in Locality 3, there is a red coloured painting of a deer with a large smoothly bending neck. It resembles the shape of painting No. 54, though, the infill is of a different and presumably later type.

### **9th register No. 57 to 61**

A little further on, to the far right is a series of four paintings (No. 57 to 60) facing left, plus the remainder of a fifth (No. 61) in the area to the right near the ledge and close to the sizeable dark area damaged by dripping beeswax. Most of these paintings are poorly preserved, except for the attractive painting No. 58. Also note the deformation of the picture of painting No. 61, due to the uneven, bumpy surface of the ceiling.

The general outline, proportions and compact shapes suggest that perhaps a boar was intended. Therefore three paintings could be depictions of wild boar, while the head has disappeared in the fourth, which is also likely to be a boar. White hairy details are visible in No. 58 and No. 60 and less evident in painting No. 57. This interpretation was also that of the individual who added red lines to the initially white paintings, especially in painting No. 58 with red hairy details. This white painting No. 58 was transformed in an attractive two-coloured painting. The outline of three out of four, is of the "second series" type, and of the remaining one (No. 58), the outline is of the type "first series".

The stylistic treatment in this register is not uniform, except for the segmentation of the legs. On the 4th register, there is also a picture which represents probable boar or perhaps a hyena (No. 32) to the right of the muntjac deer (No. 31). It is interesting to note the possible presence in this 9th register of a representation of a boar with outline "first series" type. Pictures of boar were not found on the "side panel" in the "main rock shelter" (ASI R.C. 2); however, they are present among others in a white version on the "adjacent panel" on the front side in the "main rock shelter" (ASI R.C. 2) in Locality I and also in Locality 2. It is striking that the subject of the wild boar seems to be neglected. In Southeast Asia, the wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) is a common animal, hunted extensively and in some rock art traditions in Central India, the boar is a frequently depicted subject. In the CMP-style, however paintings of this animal are rare. Remember that in India, for some contemporary ethnic groups such as Korkus, the wild boar is a totemic animal and killing it is forbidden (Mathpal, 1984).

### **10th register No. 62 to 69**

A little further on in this 10th register is a series consisting of seven representations of deer (No. 62 to 68), plus an eighth less preserved painting to the left of the natural ledge (No. 69), all facing right.

Three paintings are in a version that is nowhere else to be found in the CMP-style. In these three paintings with sober design and a high upright head, a short, tapering red stripe towards the muzzle was placed on the head at the level of the jaws, resulting in a particularly attractive painting. We refer to the third (No. 64), fourth (No. 65) and fifth painting (No. 66) of which the head and neck of the fourth (No. 65) is the best preserved. It is also the technically better one. Painting No. 65 is considered to be one of the most attractive paintings of the "master ceiling". These three paintings plus some other ones in the 8th register are again clearly the work of talented individuals.

The animal in the first painting (No. 62) is facing to the left. The white paint is not so well preserved here (in this figure, only the posterior part is shown). The details on the neck and chest, such as triangles and X-shapes, are like those used in the rightmost specimen or the eighth painting (see: No. 69). This painting No. 62 was probably added later. It is the seventh or eighth in the production and the first in this register. This first painting to the left (No. 62) also belongs to this series. The first (No. 62), and the rightmost (No. 69) in this series, therefore, look similar in terms of the neck and head filling but lack the attractive tapering red stripe on the head. The second painting (No. 63) of this series is partly outside the natural ridge.

Probably there existed a series of six paintings first (No. 63 to 68) that took up the most appropriate space, and then they added another painting at the far left (No. 62) and far right (No. 69) at all costs.

There are several differences when it comes to outlining. As mentioned before, the first painting on the left outside the ridge (No. 62), has hardly any white colour and has outline "second series". The second (No. 63) has outline "third series" whereas the third (No. 64) has outline "second series" plus an extra red longitudinal line over the middle. The fourth (No. 65) and (No. 66) both have outline "second series". The sixth (No. 67) only has "second series" for hind and abdomen outline, and the backline is left white. The seventh (No. 68) also has second series only for hind and abdomen outline and the backline is also left white here. The eighth painting (No. 69) also has second series only for hind and abdomen outline.

The white strip used for the back is tapered from the front to the back, i.e. wider than the back. In the sixth (No. 67) and seventh paintings (No. 68) white stripes were added around the neck to suggest hairs hanging down. In the seventh (No. 68) and eighth (No. 69) upright hairs or "manes" were also indicated on the neck.

As mentioned above, this eighth or rightmost painting (No. 69), has just like the less well preserved first one (No. 62), an attractive filling of the neck with red triangles or X-shapes. In the eighth painting (No. 69), this filling is considerably better preserved than in the first painting (No. 62), near the ledge. Also, on the "side panel" in the main rock shelter, one of the white paintings has three, in this case, white, X-shapes on the neck. The sixth (No. 67) and seventh paintings (No. 68) also have several oblique stripes on the back. This is also present, though less pronounced on the eighth (No. 69). So, there is no unity in the depiction of the

body. Some are more successfully executed than others, but the head-neck part of the three paintings in question is uniform and without exception well done.

In No. 65, which is technically the best painting of this series of eight paintings, the red longitudinal stripe over the middle of the neck continues over a large part of the back and chest towards the short legs. This red stripe has an attractive effect, and No. 65 is the only painting with such an extended red longitudinal line over the middle. Further analysis shows three production steps: 1) drawing in white with V/W-infill; 2) red outline and infill; 3) incidentally, white infill over red infill. The careful execution suggests that these are probably "real" two-coloured paintings, whereby "real" is, as indicated before, a substitute for careful.

Despite numerous qualities, the technically best painting No. 65 of this series has short, plump legs. The artist or artists may have miscalculated the space required, or there was a shortage of space when executing the painting. The legs had to be substantially shortened, to avoid overlapping of the lower register series. As to the second painting on the right: there is much more space available in comparison to the lower register, and therefore, the paintings in question probably have the more typical longer and slimmer legs. This suggests a flexible attitude in the mind of the artists. When evaluating and tracing work to a particular master, it is essential to realise that this is perhaps an occasional, coincidental trait, rather than a characteristic one.

There is a remarkable contrast in some of these representations between carefully and carelessly executed details. In some instances the legs are short, plump and inelegant and the bodies have been rather carelessly executed. This is in sharp contrast to the beautiful tight neck, filled with bright white and a red stripe over the middle, and the remarkably successful head with, at the level of the jaws, a tapering red line towards the muzzle. In some other representations from the same series, the legs are much more carefully and subtly represented. It could be that the bodies of the animals were drawn by different people, while the uniformly masterful treatment of the three head and neck parts is in favour of the argument that this was done by the same individual.

This particular way of depicting the neck, head and infill is already announced or imitated in representation No. 54 on the 8th register. Here is also a bright white infill of the neck with a red longitudinal line over the middle, which is a rather unusual form of representation. However, there are also differences, the neck of this representation is both long and mobile, like a goose- or swan's neck. This is characteristic of the series on this register, but here, the attractive red, tapering stripe towards the nose, at the level of the jaws is missing.

In this 10th register no work could be found with outlines of the "first series" type, so that consequently, there are no decisive arguments to qualify this register or parts of it as "early white" at this point. Furthermore, three observations deserve attention:

- 1) The particular outline variant of the "second series" type which is only found on the back and abdomen, is missing on the "side panel", and the spatial argument distribution cannot help us here.
- 2) The short tapered red stripe, towards the muzzle, is only present in this 10th register (No. 64, 65, 66) and missing on the ones in the 8th register (No. 54).
- 3) In this combination, the bright white neck with a red longitudinal line across the middle is present in this 10th register (No. 63, 64, 65), in a more extended variant only.

### **11th register No. 70 to 77**

A little further, first, note the crumbly texture and uneven surface of this somewhat restricted left-over area. The 11th register contains a series of disparate paintings. It is a slightly oval series consisting of five representations of deer (No. 70 to 74), all facing left. These paintings do not show consistency in execution and size. They are somewhat faded because of weathering, which makes them incomplete and less spectacular than painting series on previous registers. The first very poorly preserved painting on the left (No. 70) is partly on the natural ridge. The left paintings (No. 70 and 71) are redder than the rightmost which still has plenty of white colour, probably the result of better conservation. Concerning the three paintings on the right (No. 72, 73, 74) the type of outline is "second series". One of the left paintings (No. 71) has outline type "first series", while the other left painting (No. 70) can no longer be established with certainty because of damage. Painting No. 72 is also provided with short red lines on contour and neck. It has the legs "segmented", which is a stylistic trait present in many registers, but missing in most of the other paintings of this 11th register. The left deer (No. 71, 72) hold their heads up, the right one (No. 74) has its head down and is provided with robust legs. In painting No. 71, the neck is represented vertically as on the 1st register. To the right of the five deer is an attractive well-preserved large representation of a "five-legged" elephant (No. 75) in the "must" condition, facing right. To the right and opposite there is a less well-preserved two-coloured human representation (No. 76), of an archer pointing an arrow with a transverse tip at the elephant (No. 75) opposite him. Both the animal and human representations belong to the "second series" in terms of the outline. White and red lines and remnants of it are visible in the large dark zone affected by dripping beeswax. There is also a smaller animal representation (No. 77), possibly of an elephant, and there may have been more depictions of archers here.

In addition to all the difficulties around this painting zone, the view of this part is also hindered by the leaves of a cluster of trees standing directly underneath, close to the "master ceiling". Some of the leaves sometimes even touch the paintings! To the right is a sizeable dark-coloured area affected by dripping wax from bee colonies. The unusual scene whereby a human (No. 76) confronts an elephant (No. 75) has already been described earlier by me as follows: "On the "master ceiling" is a unique scene telling or retelling the story or myth of an individual with bow and arrow opposing an elephant in the "must condition". He is pointing an arrow equipped with a transverse projectile tip to the approaching unleashed animal. Instead of a routine hunting party, this risky muscular show-down probably turned into a

rather traumatic experience. Therefore also in Locality 2, an annex of Locality I, a similar event is depicted." This happens to be clearly a scene, probably the only one on "the master ceiling". (Schaap, 2017).

### **12th register No. 78 to 80**

A little further to the right are two representations of deer (No. 78 and 79), facing left and a human representation in superimposition. Instead of red, the two deer have an orange outline, identical with the orange colour of the overlapping human picture! The two two-coloured animal representations have a long, slender neck and a white stripe around the rectangular core of the body of which the contour is of "the second series" type. The painting, of a deer or antelope in orange outline (No. 78) is superimposed by an orange human representation (No. 80) with an L-shaped object, hoe, digging stick, axe, club or boomerang-like tool in his hand. To the right of it, an orange stripe is still visible. This orange human representation No. 80 is the only superposition on the "master ceiling". It is placed over the leg of a deer (No. 78) in the CMP-style. This orange-coloured human representation does not seem to be an accidental overlap, in the sense that it has just been randomly placed somewhere. On the contrary, this human representation appears to have been made very deliberately on top of this animal drawing and precisely in this place to depict the catching, wounding, killing and or slaughtering of this animal; it is a superimposition implying a deliberate act and therefore proof of the awareness of pictorial structure.

Both No. 78 and No. 80 are farthest from the vertical rock face and intuitively perceived as the most recent ones. Could it be that one has started to make drawings near the vertical rock face and then worked from there in the direction of the outer edge, i.e. farthest from the transition with the vertical rock face? However, the area in-between with some twenty or probably more recent paintings, does not support this interpretation. The orange human figure (No. 80) is not the only one. A similar orange person, depicted with a similar L-shaped object (not numbered) and waving, occurs at the opposite side near the transition zone of vertical rock wall with the overhang. As for the question about the moment when production at the "master ceiling" stopped, we might conclude that the positioning of these two – later and probably late – orange human representations, (one close to the transition with the vertical wall (not numbered) and the other (No. 80) on the 12th register, at the edge on the opposite side), seems to indicate that the work floor that covered the entire "master ceiling" was still completely intact at that time.

### **13th register No. 81**

The work is limited to remnants (No. 81), especially on the right side, and is partly affected by dripping wax from bee colonies. It is probable that there have been more paintings further towards the outer edge of the canopy.

### **The substyles on the “master ceiling”**

All the animals depicted in the CMP-style have the same infill, regardless of the species, size, pelt, skin markings and colour, i.e. the V/W-infill, and they all have been executed in white, red, or two colours in the form of white plus red infill on top.

The following substyles could be distinguished: Substyle 1) 1st register; Substyle 2) 2nd, 3rd register: zebra-patterning; Substyle 3) 4th register No. 30, 31, 32; Substyle 4) 5th register No. 34-39; Substyle 5) 6th register No. 42, 43; Substyle 6) 6th register No. 44, 45, 46; Substyle 7) 8th No. 53, 54, especially 55; Substyle 8) 10th No. 64, 66, especially 65, and No. 66-69; some remaining groups.

### **The analytical value of the components**

The analytical value of the components of the different registers of the "master ceiling" (ASI R.C. 17) is considerable. It comprises elements as stylistic features including constants and variety, stylistic connections with other panels and localities, artistic quality, the order of production including the problematising of replication, composition, iconography, internal order between the paintings and between registers, continuity, change and evolution. The analysis of the "master ceiling" produced a unique set of data about style in motion in a time-transgressive process. Also, most of the substyles found on the "master ceiling" are hardly available on the reference panel called "side panel" of the “main rock shelter” (ASI R.C. 2).

### **The meaning of prehistoric art and the context-dependent interpretation**

The search for the meaning of a prehistoric rock painting should be outside the scope of the modern rock art researcher, as it cannot be retraced. The following crucial example clearly shows how complex and fluid the meaning, and the ethnographic parallel issue is. In an Indian study on historical and recent signs and symbols in rock shelters in Odisha, India, Sharma (2018) posits: “Aboriginal people value the meaning-making function of art more than its aesthetics and cultural implications to the extent that every art containing similar symbols are read in varying ways depending on the context. The same set of circles can mean a campfire, hill, tree or spring when the element colour is introduced. This context-dependent interpretation even occurs within the same tribe. The signs and symbols may look similar to each other, but their tradition differs from region to region, tribe to tribe which one generation passes to the next generation. Even colours have their symbolism; for example, spiritual meaning may be assigned to the colour red, while the ancestors may be associated with the colour white.”

On the "master ceiling" high above the head, we see a confusing multitude of animals, an overwhelming animal world. Is this also a message transmitted by the CMP-style artists?

## The relevance of the spatial distribution and area-availability-and-use-pattern

The research goal is here to distinguish substyles and not to reconstruct the order of production. In the reference “side panel” are no inter-figure superpositions, there is only intra-figure superposition, a mode of superposition that has to be explained as the result of replication. This lack of stratigraphies and therefore problematic situation, led to our spatial distribution and area-availability-and-use-pattern assumption, that is: it seemed as if they were starting with large-sized paintings in the most appropriated spatial positions. Also, on the “master ceiling” there are no superpositions, and size differences as present on the “side panel” are absent, except two, species-related and therefore larger, pictures of a tiger (No. 48) and an elephant (No. 75), and one larger figure of a quadruped, probably a herbivore like deer (No. 9).

Consequently, the size of the paintings in the CMP-style could not be used as a diagnostic element in our efforts to understand the order of production on the “master ceiling”. There are however other indices that seem to support our assumption: that they were starting preferably in the most appropriate spatial positions.

In the 1st register, there are two small red deer pictures in the CMP-style (No. 6 and No. 8) that seem to be added later, in the remaining restricted space. Next, to the far right, and placed in the margin, is a large white animal figure in the CMP-style, stylistically different with angular shapes facing to the left (No. 9), and with scattered traces and stains of white paint underneath and around this painting. This painting No. 9 is the largest of the entire “master ceiling”, together with the tiger picture (No. 48) on the 7th register and the elephant picture (No. 75) on the 11th register. Those three large-sized paintings are in the CMP-style. In the 5th register, the first deer picture in the CMP-style (No. 33) is stylistically quite different from the next six deer pictures in the CMP-style to the right, and the eighth deer picture in the CMP-style (No. 40) is also different from the first and the six before (No. 34 to 39). In this 5th register are two stylistic tendencies in the CMP-style present: a trend-following and another that emphasises variation. In the 6th register, there is a red dotted painting (No. 41) at the edge of the panel. Also, in the reference “side panel” there is one red dotted panel and again at the edge of the panel. The relation of the red dotted infill to the CMP-style is unclear. In the 7th register, there is also an animal figure provided with an infill of red dots (No. 47). It consists of a compact, stocky animal figure, presumably a depiction of a leopard, and probably added later in a remaining restricted area. In the 10th register is painting No. 62 in the CMP-style placed to the left and painting No. 69 in the CMP-style to the right of a series of six paintings also in the CMP-style. Both paintings have the standardised V/W-infill for the body and are depicted with red triangles or X-shapes on the neck. A type of infill of the neck also present on some paintings in the reference “side panel”.

All those individual CMP-style paintings differ stylistically from the adjacent series of CMP-style paintings, and they were probably added later. Therefore in tracing the trajectory of the CMP-style, it can be helpful to study the first and last painting(s) from a horizontal register and the paintings in the restricted remaining areas. Perhaps it can be used also in the study of other artistic traditions.

### **Style analysis as an intellectual attitude**

To conclude: in our view, style internally varies within the different panels and registers and therefore, it is predictable that stylistic analyses of different painting panels and registers produce different results. A style concept applied to rock paintings is not to be regarded as definite and fixed. The paintings all differ somewhat from each other, which is the quintessence of creative performances, or style varies internally. In these individual artistic creations, there is a continuous flow of changes, resulting from different stylistic undercurrents. We try to give them one stylistic label, but after all, a style concept is primarily a short-lived parameter, and the more material - both synchronous and diachronic - one wants to describe, the more unreal such a stylistic characterisation becomes. It is always a limitation and an effort to represent things as definite. That is why the concept of substyle is of some use here. The results point to the need for further study and also lead to the conclusion that style analysis is an intellectual attitude which is more than just a fixed label.

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