

Prehistory in Thailand

Prehistory in Thailand refers to a period before recorded history. Archaeological evidence has been used to interpret the way of life of man. This evidence shows that human beings inhabited the area of Thailand over 100 years ago.

Current prehistoric chronology refers to 3 important factors : Technological Development Economical and Pattern of Community and Geological Dating.

1. The Stone Age the period when stone implements became prehistoric men's everyday tools. The period can be divided into 3 subgroups:
 - 1.1 The Old Stone Age (Paleolithic) - when prehistoric man used a unifaceted pebble flake as a chopping tool.
 - 1.2 The Mesolithic Age - when prehistoric man used a complex stone implement similar to that of the Hoabinhian culture an oval-shaped unifaceted or bifaceted pebble flake .
 - 1.3 The Neolithic Age - when prehistoric man used a delicate and complex implement similar to a polished adze as a knife and sometimes as a digger.
2. The Metal Age the period of Metal implement making which can be divided into 2 subgroups :
 - 2.1 The Bronze Age - the period of bronze implement usage when prehistoric man utilized smelting and casting technologies. They made tools , weapons and ornaments from copper and tin.
 - 2.2 The Iron Age – the period of iron implement use when prehistoric used iron for making stronger implements.

Economical and Patterns of Communities Dating

1. Hunting and Gathering Communities – when prehistoric man lived in small family unit with permanent habitation.
2. Agricultural Communities – when prehistoric man lived medium-sized family unit remained longer in one area, maintained herds of cattle and planted crops.
3. Social Communities – when prehistoric man lived in large family group with leaders.

Geological Dating

1. Pleistocene epoch – when prehistoric man lived by hunting and gathering and had no permanent habitations , such as shacks or rock shelters. They used rough stone implements similar to the Hoabinhian culture.
2. Holocene epoch – when prehistoric man still survived by hunting and gathering but stay longer in one place. They lived in small communities with leaders, they had permanent habitation and they also had contacts with other communities. Pottery vessels with various patterns came into use.

Rock art in Thailand

Cave art or rock art, consists of paintings or colored drawings on the walls of caves, the rock shelters or large stones. It served 2 purposes :

1. Ritual art, following strict patterns of belief of tradition , resulted from stimulus the creator.
2. General art came from inside the creator, who uses various designs from within his imaginatios.

Rock art depicted easily recognized symbols for the people of a particular community. Both simple and complicated figures were created at rest and in motion.

There are many rock art sites throughout Thailand. Rock art has mostly been found in limestone and sandstone mountains, but in Loei province it was found at Granite mountain.

Rock art can be classified into 2 groups, by techniques :

1. Coloring, by various techniques such as dry-color drawing, painting, spraying, impressing and color-shaking.
2. Etching, by various techniques such as chiseling, scraping and craving.

Various techniques were used to create rock art :

1. Human figures were depicted as silhouettes, outline, partial silhouettes stick figures and signs.
2. Animal figures were shown in silhouettes and outline from, especially tortoises, snapping turtles and frogs. Animal such as oxen, dogs, deer and fish were shown in profile.
3. Hand printing techniques included spraying , printing, drawing and flat-colored painting.

Red was the most dominant color in rock art in Thailand, but yellow, white and black drawings have also been found. These pigments came from natural minerals-red from iron oxides such as hematite, yellow from limonite, white from gypsum, black from manganese. Gum or animal wax used as glue for permanent work. Brushes were made of fibrous sticks and animal hair, and finger were also used .



Tham Lai Thaeng

Tham Lai Thaeng Some 800 metres from Tham Phaya Nakharat is tham Lai Thaeng whose wall has ancient paintings on some two-square metre area. The paintings contain some 70 pictures of humans, animals, and others, mirroring culture and life in the pre-historical period dating back to over 2,000 years ago.



Tham Phi Hua To

Tham Phi Hua To or Tham Hua Kalok is located in amphoe Ao Lukon Phi Hua To Mountains, which are surrounded by mangrove swamps. The cave is accessible by the same route as Tham Lot Tai with its entrance not far beyond the canal to Tham Lot Tai. The mouth of the is some 6-7 meters above ground level, From the entrance, the cave divides into 2 routes, the left one leading to a vast chamber pierced by a shaft of light, while the right route leads to a hall believed by archaeologists to have been once a shelter for prehistoric people. Rock paintings can be seen within the cave. The paintings, 70 of them, are painted in red and black and portray people as well as animals, The cave was named Phi Hua To or Big-headed Ghost owing to the unusually large skulls discovered there. All have since disappeared. A large pile of shells were also found in the cave.



Khao Chan Ngarm Cave

Si Khiu District

About 44 km. from Downtown Korat. The cave is located on a back yard of "Wat Khao Chan Ngarm"

The rock art is classified as the prehistoric paint. The age of the rock art can be dated roughly to about 3,000 years ago.

There are depictions of men, women, children in various actions, such as sitting, dancing, standing with a dog, and firing arrow with bows. The bodies themselves are clear to see with the calf section distinctively large. The figures compose a scene, in which reflects the way of life of people who created the rock art with respected to significant contents appearing in the rock art.

It is so-called "cave", but actually it is a layer of large stones, one is on top of another. The rock art is written over the surface of stone.



