

Archaeological study of the prehistoric rock paintings of ampasimaiky rock shelter, in the upper Onilahy, Isalo Region, Southwestern Madagascar.

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The present work is the archaeological study of the prehistoric rock paintings of Ampasimaiky rock shelter, in the upper Onilahy, Isalo region, South Western Madagascar. It is the first systematic study on the prehistoric rock paintings site found in Madagascar and the rest of islands of Western Indian Ocean south of the equator. Based on systematic methods and techniques, this study provides indubitable groundbreaking archaeological evidences that contribute largely to the understanding of the prehistory of Madagascar which was not archaeologically known thitherto to have prehistoric rock paintings, neither human settlement prior to 8th century AD. Based on plausible evidence of Mediterranean African ancient inscriptions encountered at Ampasimaiky rock shelter supported by ancient historical records, circumstantial archaeological and paleontological evidences, linguistic data, and to some extent DNA analysis results the present study provides minimum age falling in the bracket time around 500 BC to roughly 8th century AD for the rock paintings of Ampasimaiky rock shelter. From these perspectives, this study establishes, for the first time in the archaeological researches conducted in Madagascar, earlier contacts between the great island and the Mediterranean world including Northern Africa. Furthermore, what has always been termed "rock art" is, also revised in the present work. It is ascertained that African schematic, geometric and amorphous paintings and engravings are not "art" but a form of ancient "writing system". Lastly, the close affinity between the paintings of Ampasimaiky rock shelter with those of the African mainland brings new knowledge on the distribution of the African rock paintings sites.