Design Resource
Documentation of Warli Art
Traditional Folk Art
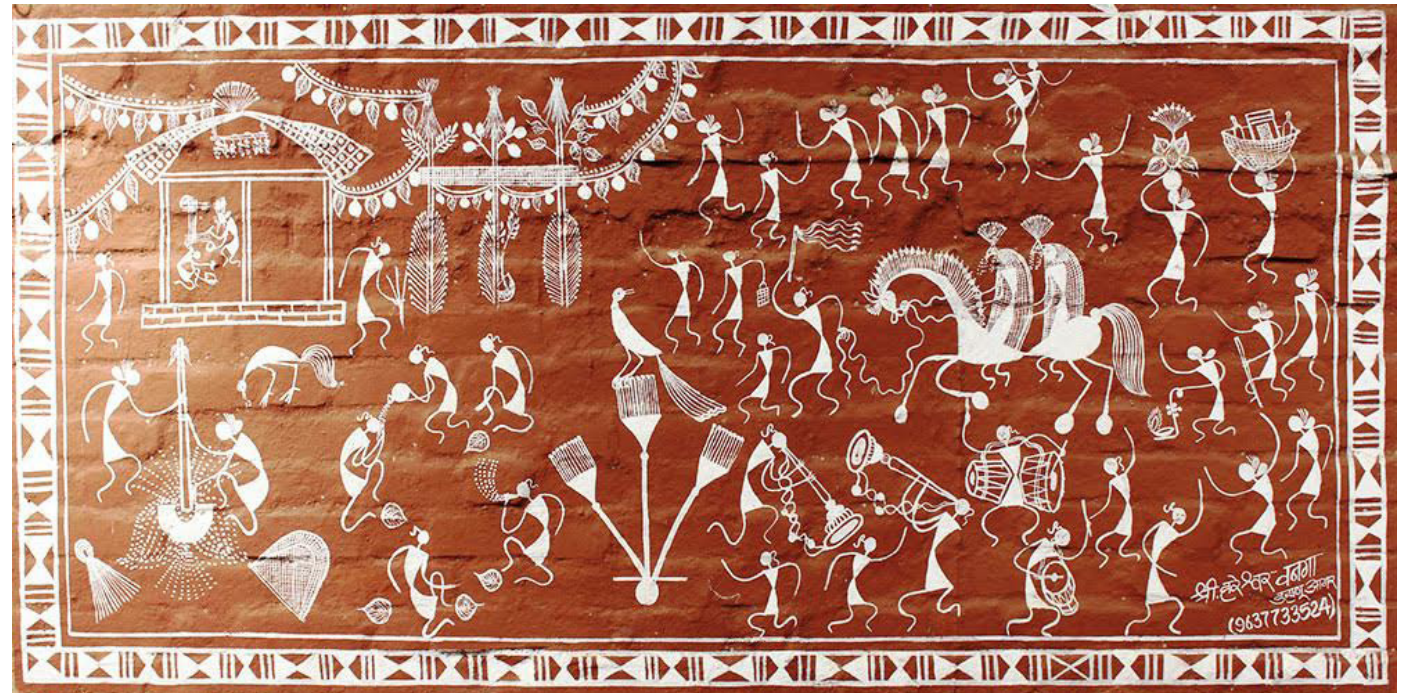by
Sagar Yende and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:
http://www.dsource.in/resource/documentation-warli-art

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Source:
http://www.dsource.in/resource/documentation-war-li-art/introduction

Introduction

Warli art is one of rich traditional folk-art practiced and preserved by tribal communities in India. Warli art is found in northern outskirts of Thane and Palghar district of Maharashtra. Tribal communities named Warli, Malkhar Koli, Kathodi, Kokana, Dhodi follow this art-form as it is an integral part of their culture. Roots of this art can be found in to the 10th century. Similar paintings of 500 and 10000 BC are found in rock shelters of Bhimket-ka, Madhya Pradesh.

Warli art is ancient, highly repetitive and symbolic in nature. It follows visual style and contain repetitive elements. Warli artists are now also changing its expression form just paintings to products of consumer value as Warli art is becoming popular among modern society. Warli art is visual representations of lifestyle and culture of tribal community. It carry-forwards the values, traditions and knowledge from one generation to next, In the form of paintings on mud walls of huts and temples . Warli art in the form of paintings is internationally appreciated art form but very few people knows about the lifestyle and culture of tribal depicted in these painting of Warli art.
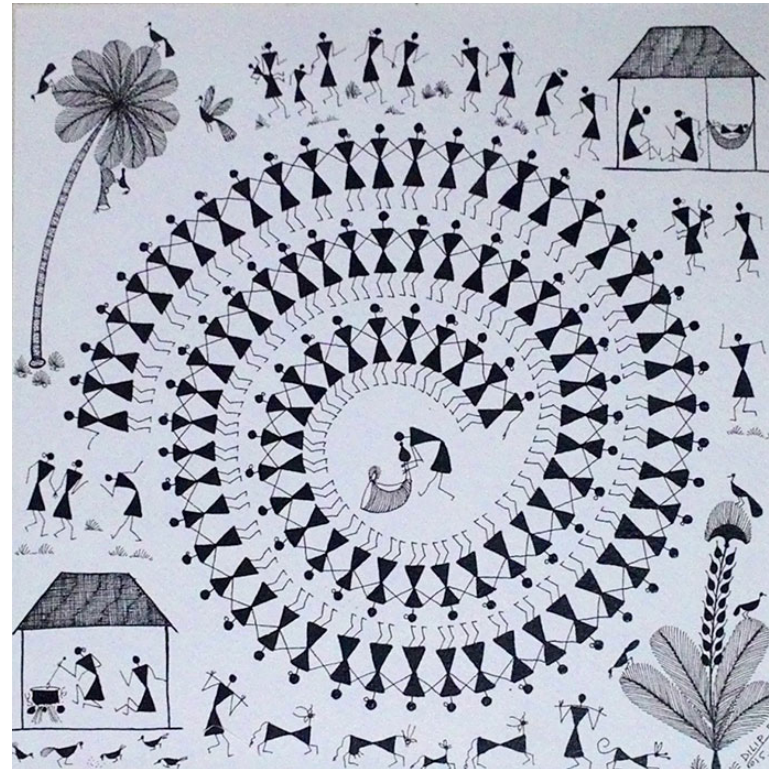
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Place

Warli painting is a tribal art and mostly practiced by Adivasi from North Sahyadri Range, Northern part of Thane and Palghar district that includes Dahanu, Talasari. I visited a Pada in Talasari of Palghar district, 'Pada' is a small village of a population less than 1000. Lifestyle of tribal in village is closely associated and dependent on nature. Five to six artists in that pada are practicing Warli art commercially. They used to send their artwork to Mumbai for sale as it is the only nearest city. A village is surrounded with rice fields and natural water bodies. In order to take benefit of these natural blessings to attract tourists to the village, a group of artists is planning to set an Warli art gallery in pada. Most of these artists have two or more source of income as income from paintings is not assured and not enough for living. Rice cultivation is main source of income for most of the villagers. Now youth in village is migrating to a city like Mumbai in search of jobs.

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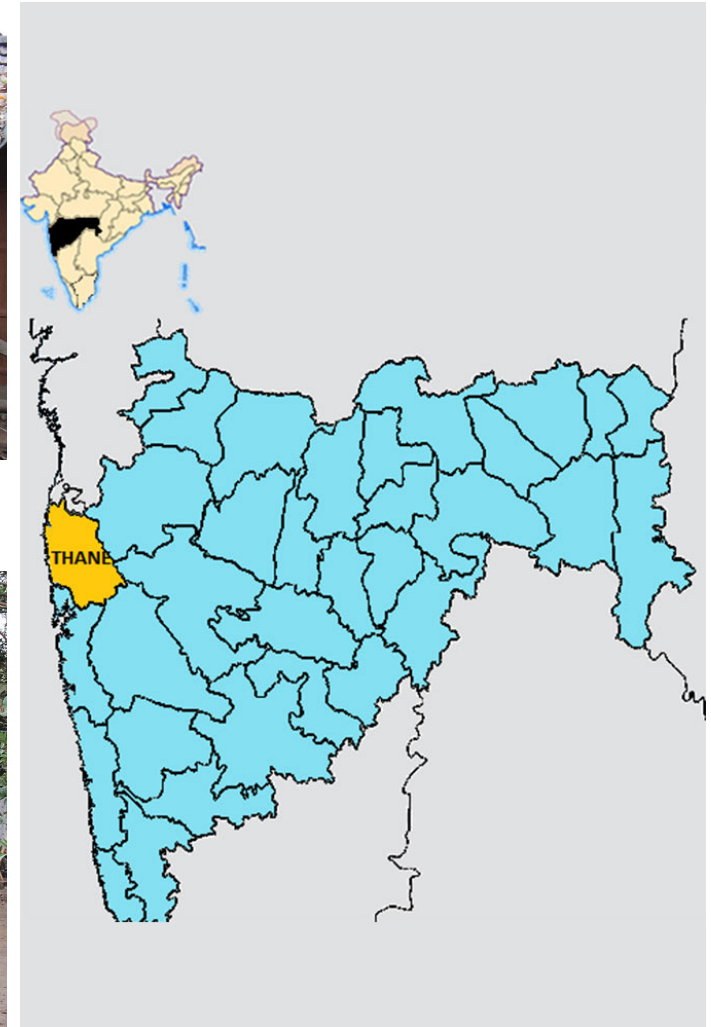
Typical houses in tribal area of Talasari.

Typical houses in tribal area of Talasari.

Location Of Thane and Plaghar districts.

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Location Of Thane and Plaghar districts.

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Warli Art on entrance of local Krishna temple at Talasari.

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Source:
http://www.dsource.in/resource/documentation-warli-art/history

History

Warli art resembles to prehistoric cave paintings, according to book on Warli 'Painted World of the Warli' by Yashodhara Dalmia, roots of Warli can be found back to 2500 to 3000 BCE. Its visual resemblance to the cave paintings points to its prehistoric origin. Warli art is form of such preserved and practiced art by tribal community as it becomes the part of their traditions and hence this art form propagated from one generation to next generation. In late 1970s an artist Jivya Soma Mashe started practicing Warli art on everyday basis and not only as part of rituals. His exceptional talent and work in Warli soon got national and international recognition. He received the Padma Shri award for his contribution towards Warli painting. He introduced Warli to the world as an art form and inspired many tribal youth to practice Warli as commercial art. Now tribal youth identified potential of their traditional art and started using its benefit for the development of their community. Even formal government approved courses and training of Warli is now available in this area to empower youth and create new Warli artists.

Prehistoric cave painting.

Prehistoric cave painting.

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Warli Artist

Till now the propagation of Warli-art was from one generation to the next. It is a part of culture and events for tribes living in northern part of Thane and Palghar district, some parts of Nashik and Gujarat close to Maharashtra Gujarat border. These tribes mostly live in villages and Padas of these areas. They yet to have adequate education, healthcare and infrastructure facilities in these areas. These artist are practicing Warli as traditional art and they learnt it through practice from their childhood. Nowadays formal training in Warli art is available for interested tribal students, Creating wide range of Warli artists right from illiterate to graduated tribal students. Most of the artist's have other source of income such as job in local industry or farming and in their free time they follow their passion for painting which helps them to have some extra income. Warli artist now identified the commercial potential of this art. Local artists are uniting under different local organizations to create new marketing platforms such as social media pages and websites to reach worldwide customers. Artists are also developing merchandise goods and other consumer products using Warli art.

Image source - www.warli.in

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Mr. Dayanand Parhyad - Warli Artist.
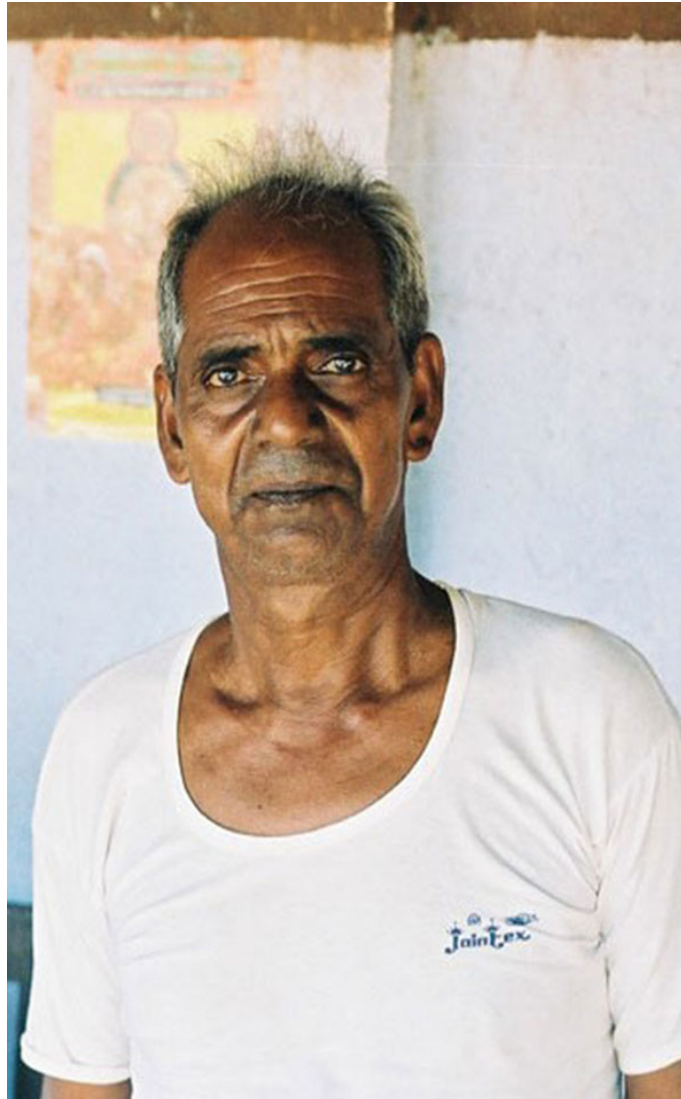
Jivya Soma Mashe is a first commercial Warli artist to get national award for tribal art.
[Image source - paramparikkarigar.com]

Image source - www.warli.in

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Process

Warli art is traditionally done on mud walls of huts. These paintings are of cultural and religious importance in their lifestyle. Traditionally these paintings are made on events of social and cultural importance such as marriage, harvesting session, sowing session, and other social gatherings. Paintings were done with bamboo sticks used as brush with rice pest mixed with natural gum as color. First a canvas is prepared by applying a layer of mud or cowdung, ones it is dried it is ready to paint with bamboo brush. Only two colors are used in this process, white is made up of rice flour and reddish brown from red soil called Geru.

Painting on a mud wall with Geru (Red soil) used for background. Painting shows the preparations of Marriage ceremony.

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This painting is about a traditional element in warli painting ' Tree of Life'. Central tree is supporting all forms of life under Sun a source of all energy. All elements in paintings like birds, monkeys and humans are celebrating a tree of life.

A painting is about rice fields and day-to-day activities in life of tribal community, central element is a dance formation for Tarpa Nritya. Paddy field is shown at bottom and daily activities of ladies in community is shown around houses. Mountain and forest at the top contain variety of animals like scorpion, snake, deer, ants and tiger etc.

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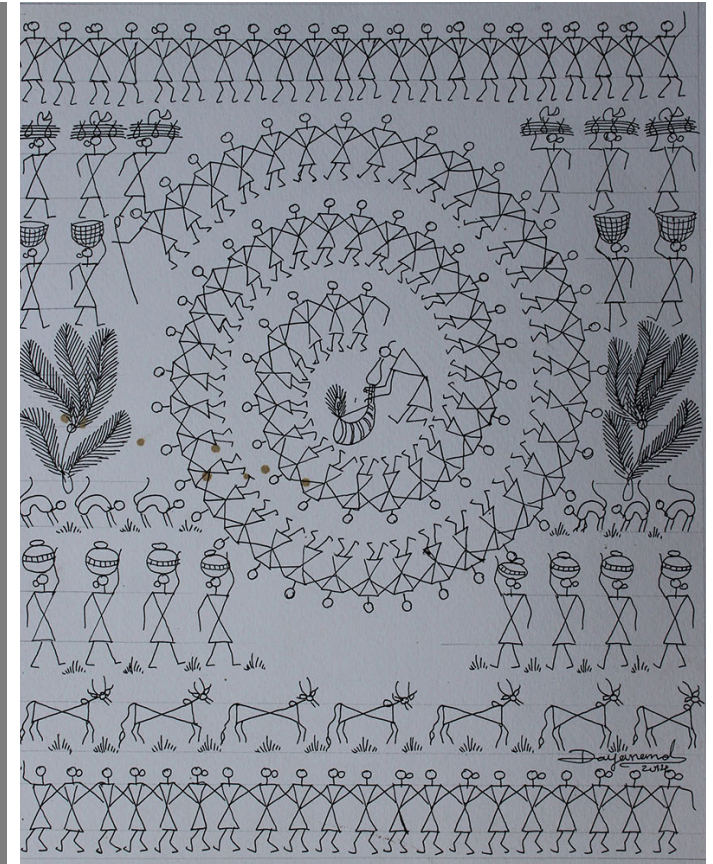Sagar Yende and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah
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This is an outline painting of famous traditional com-
position known as 'Lagnach Chouk'. These paintings are
line drawings those shapes will be filled in next stage
of painting. Lagnacha Chouk shows the preparations of
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dal and Trapa Dance and their musical instruments.

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Cloth is wrapped over the glass bottle using glue.

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Warli Paintings

Warli painting have a very basic graphic vocabulary like Circles, Triangles, Squares & lines. Straight were are not part of traditional Warli art, in old paintings these lines are made up of series of dots now artists are using straight lines. Elements of Warli painting represent members of community and nature and events depicted in Warli paintings are part of their social life. There are some common patterns in Warli art like 'Lagnacha Chauk', it is a traditional panting for marriage ceremony. Repetitive visual elements includes Tree of life, Tarpa dance, Baarisi festival and Peran.

Warli painting never uses religious iconography such as figures of gods and religious symbols. It represents the nature as a god and talks about human dependence and association with nature. Warli paintings depict a sense of uniformity in people and highlights close social relations within their community members. Elements in paintings such as trees, animals, events, social gatherings and formations of humans are from real life scenarios and situations. A Warli painting can also be a visual narration of their traditional stories. Artists nowadays are including elements of modern world such as bicycle, car, building, computers, airplane and trains.

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This is a painting on harvesting session of paddy fields, It shows men and women working in farms with water-body and mountain around it, along with men and women painting shows animals living in their ecosystem such as fishes, lobsters, crabs in water and monkeys, peacocks, birds and deers in mountain. Dogs and goats are with humans.

New Trends

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Source:
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New Trends

To take benefits of commercial potential of Warli art and to make it more appropriate product for larger market, Some organizations of Warli artists focusing on developing new products using Warli art. These products include products in association with other local craftsmen like potters and bamboo craftsmen. Commercial products include merchandise goods like T-shirts and handkerchief with Warli patterns, Bamboo pen stand, Key-chains, Table pots and other Stationery products.

Greeting card by a warli artist in talasari.

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Warli art on Pots made by local potters in area.

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Wrali art on Bamboo pen holder.

key chains using bamboo and warli art.

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These paintings are examples of new experiments. In this painting artist used uneven sizes of characters to break the monotonous nature of figures in warli art.

These paintings are examples of new experiments. This painting is colored form of traditional painting, it depicts three important events in human life. First circle is about birth of baby and his/her first bath, second circle shows marriage and bath ceremony before it. Third circle is about death and traditional bathing of dead body.

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Pen holders using bamboo and Warli art.
[Image source - www.warli.in]

jewellery box with Wrli art.
[Image source - www.warli.in]

jewellery box with Wrli art.
[Image source - www.warli.in]

T-shirts with Warli patterns.
[Image source - www.warli.in]

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Source:
http://www.dsource.in/resource/documentation-war-li-art/references

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• Handmade in India (Crafts of India) Edited by: Aditi Ranjan and M P Ranjan

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• http://paramparikkarigar.com/blog/
• https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jivya_Soma_Mashe
• http://www.warli.in
• https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warli_painting

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Contact Details

This documentation was done by Sagar Yende at IDC, IIT Bombay.

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