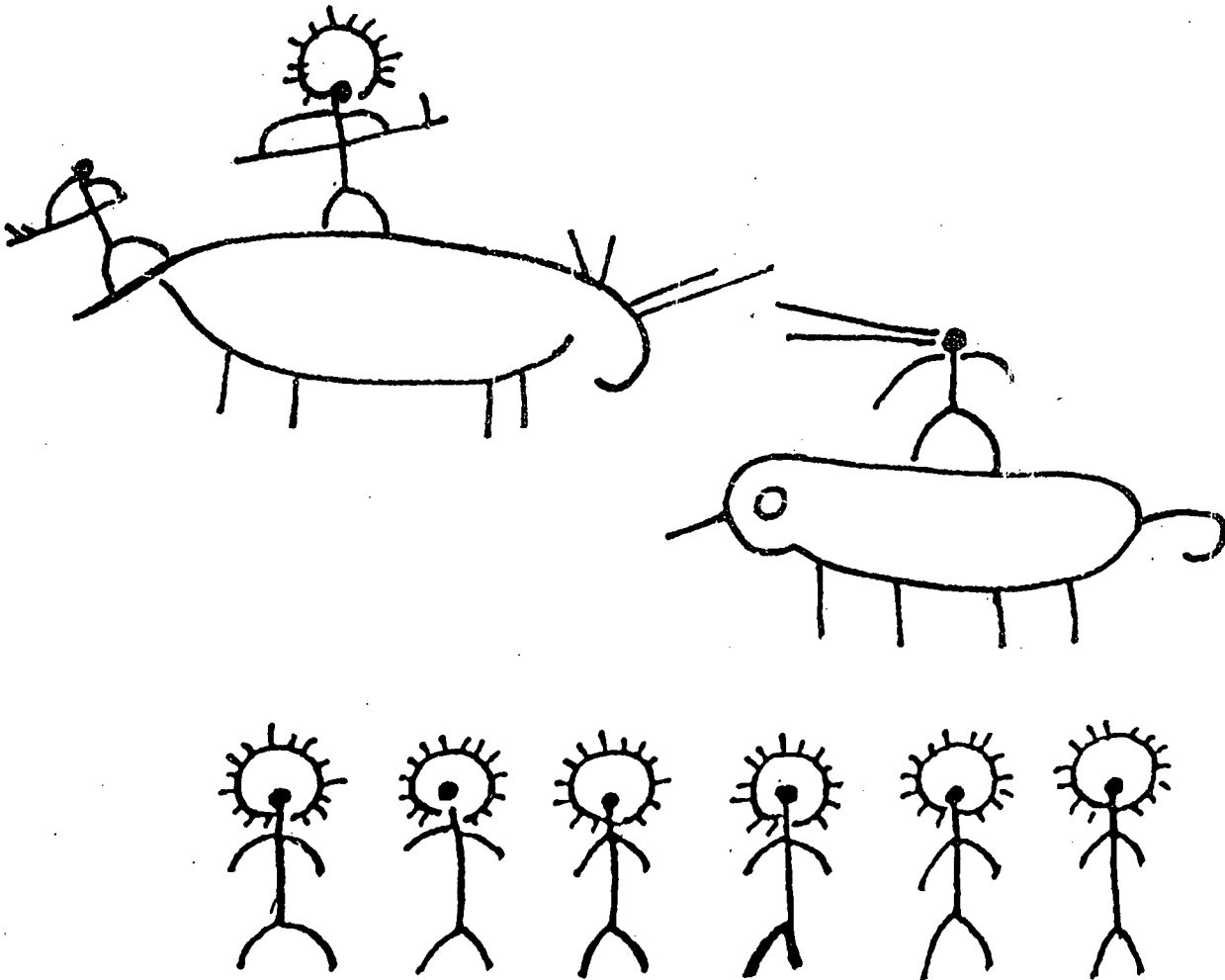


# VEDDA CAVE DRAWINGS



Vedda cave drawings such as these found at Hamangala provide graphic evidence of the sublime spiritual and artistic vision achieved by the ancestors of today's Wanniyalaeto people. Most researchers today agree that the artistes most likely were the Wanniyalaeto women who spent long hours in these caves waiting for their husbands' return from the hunt.

Understood from this perspective, these cave drawings depict brilliant feats of Wanniyalaeto culture as seen through the eyes of its womenfolk. The simple yet graceful abstract figures are portrayed engaging in feats of vision and daring that place them firmly above even the greatest beasts of their jungle habitat.

The nimbus or halo about the human figures' heads represents the Sun's disc and, equally, the sacred power

bordering upon divinity that accrues not only to great hunters but to all those endowed with the vision to behold and apprehend the marvel of divinity in humble guise. Even up to modern times, the Wanniyalaeto used to swear oaths of truth by the divinity in the Sun, saying 'upon Maha Suriyo Deviyo'.

Such cave drawings have long served as visual memory aids and as teaching tools for the transmission of ancestral wisdom traditions to succeeding generations. To this day, they provide silent testimony to the profound heights attained by Lanka's indigenous culture expressed with elegant simplicity that people of all communities may appreciate.

Drawings courtesy of Gamini De S. A. Punchihewa from *Souvenirs of a forgotten heritage*