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Archaeological Remains in Kachhimdola & Deundi Village of Kalahandi

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Abstract

The history of modern Kalahandi goes back to the primitive period where a well-civilized, urbanized and cultured people inhabited on this land mass around 2000 years ago. The world's largest celt of Stone Age and the largest cemetery of the megalithic age have been discovered in Kalahandi – this shows the region had cradle of civilization since the pre-historic era. Asurgarh near Narla in Kalahandi was one of the oldest civilization in Odisha. Some other historical forts in the region includes Budhigarh (ancient period), Amthagarh (ancient period), Belkhandi (ancient to medieval period) and Dadpur-deypur (medieval period). In ancient history this kingdom was serving as salt route to link between ancient Kalinga and South Kosala. This land was unconquered by the great Ashoka, who fought the great Kalinga war (Ashokan record).

Temple of Goddess Stambeswari at Asurgarh, built during 500 AD, is a perfect example where the first brick Temple in Eastern India was built. Sanskritization in Odisha was first started from Kalahandi, Koraput region in ancient Mahakantara region. Earliest flat-roofed stone temple of Odisha was built at Mohangiri in Kalahandi during 600 AD. Temple architecture achieved perfection at Belkhandi in Kalahandi. The distribution and occurrence of precious and semi-precious gemstones and other commercial commodities of Kalahandi region have found place in accounts of Panini in 5th century BC, Kautilya in 3rd century BC, Ptolemy in 2nd century AD, Wuang Chuang in 7th century AD and Travenier in 19th century AD. Present name Kalahandi finds mention for the first time in the Junagarh Dadhivaman temple inscription issued from Kalahandinagara by Maharaja Jugasai Dev in A. D. 1718. It was a feudatory under Eastern Ganga Dynasty, Gadajit under Maratha and Princely State under British rule in India. After independence of India, in 1948, Kalahandi joined Indian Union and became a part of Odisha state.

Our present study Archaeological remains in Kachhimdola & Deundi village of Kalahandi focused the ancient habitations in those areas. The village of Kachhimdola is located about fourteen kilometers south-west from Junagarh sub-division in Kalahandi district. The ancient mound, locally called as Padarbeda (Lat. 19° 44' 29.6" N; Long. 82° 51' 35.1" E) is situated about 900 m south of the modern village, and 150 m south from the right bank Kamri Jor, a tributary of river Hati. The mound is almost disturbed because of the extensive agricultural operations. But one can easily find the ancient cultural material scattered on the surface. Another site discovered was near the modern village of Deundi on the other bank of Kamri Jor just opposite of Padarbeda/Kachhimdola. The ancient mound is situated near the Lokeshwar temple (Lat. 19° 45' 14.4" N; Long. 82° 50' 57.1" E), 600 m north-west of the village. Only a small portion of the mound is preserved, and the rest portion was dug by the villagers in search of ancient bricks and different parts of the stone temple which was situated there once upon a time.

Keyword: Primitive, Karond, Archaeology, Kosala, Megalithic age

Introduction

Archaeological investigations conducted in Kalahandi district (190, 03' - 210, 05' North latitude and 820, 20' - 830, 47' East longitude), situated on the south-western part of Odisha, have brought to light cultural succession right from the Stone age to the Early Medieval period (Sahu 1980: 1-7; Prusty 1992: 55-66; Mohanty, Joglekar and Mishra 1998-99: 120-13; Mohanty and Mishra 2001: 16- 26, 2005: 97-124; Yule 2006; Patra 2007: 27-36). Perennial rivers such as the Tel, Indravati and Jonk and the valleys and plateaus created by them provided an atmosphere for the

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growth of settlements in different period of time. Palaeolithic is being documented in Kalahandi, from Moter river basin near Dharamgarh region (Prusty 1992). The painting of Gudahandi shows the presence of human settlement in this region, during prehistoric time (Patra 2007). Similarly microlithic and neolithic sites are recored in Bijadongar, Koradongar near Junagarh, Gudahandi, Budigarh, Chandrasagarnala, Bhaludongar, Chilpa, Habaspur, Belkhandi, Jamugudapadar, Dongargarh, Asurgarh, Phurlijharan, Ghantmal, Jampadar, Pipalnala, Godang, Budipadar, Mahimapadia, Penjorani and Yogimath (Mohanty and Mishra 2001, 2005; Mishra 2011). The Cemetery of Bileikani in the river bank of the Tel, Menhir and stone circles at Bhairavapada, Ruppangudi, Sagada, Themra and Bhawanipatna represent the distribution of Iron Age/megalithic culture in the district of Kalahandi.

This part of Odisha, have been identified as a gemstone belt, containing precious and semi-precious stones such as diamond, ruby, topaz, moonstone, amethyst, smoky quartz, alexandrite and garnet of different varieties which are associated with the iron ore/pegmatite deposits of the Eastern Ghats (Basu, Dani and Pati 1995: 367-369). Even one can easily find mention of valuable stones of this region in the account of Kautilya and Ptolemy (Rangarajan 1994). The accidental discovery of a hoard of 539 punch marked coins from inside the fort of Asurgarh-Narla by P.K. Deo in 1958 and trial excavation conducted by Department of History, Sambalpur University in collaboration with Department of Culture, Govt. of Odisha in Feb-March, 1973 under the direction of Late Prof. N.K. Sahu, provides a new picture of the early historic settlement remains in this part of India. Since then, a number of early historic sites are reported by various scholars in Kalahandi district e.g. Belkhandi, Bhimkela, Budhigarh, Dumerbahal-Gupti, Urlukupagarh, Terasingha and Sirpur (Mohanty et al., 1998-99; Mishra 2005, 2011). Though some general inferences are drawn by scholars on the basis of surface finds and those excavated without documented material evidences, pertaining to the decline and fall of ancient towns and cities, but no systematic research was carried out to understand the early historic archaeology of Kalahandi. Our present survey has brought to light archaeological remains from two sites named as Kachhimdola and Deundi (Fig. 1) near Junagarh sub-division in southern part of Kalahandi. A brief account of the findings is given below.

Kachhimdola (19° 44' 16.08" N; 82° 51' 32.47" E)

The village of Kachhimdola is located about ten kilometers south-west from Junagarh sub-division in Kalahandi district. The ancient mound, locally called as Padarbeda (Lat. 19° 44' 29.6" N; Long. 82° 51' 35.1" E) is situated about 300 m north of the modern village, and 150 m south from the right bank Kamri Jor, a tributary of river Hati. The mound is almost disturbed because of the extensive agricultural operations. But one can easily find the ancient cultural material scattered on the surface.

Deundi (19° 44' 47.68" N; 82° 50' 56.58" E)

The modern village of Deundi is situated on the other bank of Kamri Jor just opposite of Belguda. The ancient mound is situated near the Lokeshwar temple (Lat. 19° 45' 14.4" N; Long. 82° 50' 57.1" E), 600 m north-west of the village. Only a small portion of the mound is preserved, and the rest portion was dug by the villagers in search of ancient bricks and different parts of the stone temple which was situated there once up on a time.

Findings

As we already mentioned the ancient mound of Padarbeda/Belguda is almost disturbed because of the extensive agricultural activity, but except the small portion of a structural wall made of burnt bricks found *in situ* which can be easily visible in the lower level of the exposed section, nothing was found in well preserved condition and intact. Therefore our collection is consisted of the surface finds only. The size of the brick is 36 x 20 x 7 cm more close to the bricks of Nehena (Mishra 2011: 156); and if we consider the brick size given by Marshall (Dhavalikar 1999: 163-64) it again matches with the brick size of Satavahana. Fragment of reed impressed burnt clay lamps are also recorded in good quantity. This indicated the building activity but it is difficult to say whether the settlers lived in wattle and daub houses or in the house made of burnt bricks. The pottery, most of it very simple in shape is dominated by red and red slipped wares comprises of bowls, dishes and vessels. Most of them are in rolled condition but few shapes could be dated to early historic period. The most significant discovery is a small fragment of Black and Red ware. The inside display very unusual feature that on a dark grey background a black slip was applied but the exterior slip was peeled up. Other findings included fragments of stone pestle, a broken stone tool made of quartzite, shell, flakes and cores of quartz of different size probably used for bead manufacturing, though there is no direct evidence for it but during the conversation with villagers we got the information that beads made of precious and semi-precious stones were scattered on the surface in and around the mound but during our survey we are not able to find even a single bead from this site. On the other bank of Kamri Jor in Deundi near the Lokeshwar temple similar finds like pottery (except Black and Red ware), reed impressed burnt clay lamps and bricks were discovered. As per Shri Madhav Chanran Behera (an 80 years old man), "in late 1970s fragments of temple were recovered from the earth, and after that the local people excavated the whole area. From the digging operation number of rock-cut sculptures particularly of Parvati and Siva, brick walls and many other cultural materials were unearthed. The modern temple is constructed out of the material recovered at that time and not a single new architectural fragment is added to it. He again gives us information that the pottery fragments and other artefacts like iron was also encountered around the temple". The architectural fragments of the temple and rock-cut sculptures clearly indicate that they belong to the post-Gupta and Early Medieval period.

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Discussion

On the basis of our preliminary examination of circumstantial evidence it may be said that the area was occupied during the early centuries of Christian era and inhabited up to the medieval period. It is important to note that several early historic sites have been reported earlier on the northern part of Kalahandi but the present investigation gives light on the southern part. Large-scale systematic investigations of this region in the future will definitely throw light on the various aspects of the socio-economic-religious and cultural life of the ancient people and to understand the growth, pattern and archaeological significance of early historic Western Odisha. Terra cotta has been scattered here and there on both of the sites and it is said that terra cotta practiced in India since the start of the Christian era. The samples of terra cotta found in Padarbeda/Kachhimdola may relate date back close to that time. Entirely made of common clay, baked and left unglazed, most were essential household utilities like the tiles for roofs, jugs, pitchers, kitchenware and lamps. Other works would made for decorative purposes. Terra cotta is the oldest material used in Ancient Indian pottery, and has a number of uses for both utilitarian and aesthetic purposes. Brightly colored iconic figures of Ancient Indian deities are some of the oldest and most famous pieces of this terra cotta style. The figures are made exclusively by women for particular ceremonies, and are offered as a tribute to the gods or as tools for religious rituals. But during our preliminary survey no such figures have been found.

In both the sites at Padarbeda/Kachhimdola and Deundi; a number of bricks have been found. A brick is a block made up of clay burnt in a kiln. It is one of the primary building materials known to mankind. Over time, bricks have appeared, gained prominence, lost importance and then come to the forefront again with various styles of architecture. Burnt bricks were used in ancient Indian, Babylon, Egypt and Roman civilizations. They are still being used as filler materials for framework structures as well as to construct load bearing structures. Down the ages, there have been various interesting historic and cultural references to bricks. Bricks find mention in the Bible; the tower of Babel was built with burnt bricks. Bricks were predominantly used in the Indus valley civilisation. In fact, the civilisation was first discovered when ancient bricks being used to build railway ballast came to the notice of a passing archaeologist. So, the importance of bricks for the ruined civilization of Padarbeda/Kachhimdola and Deundi would be found after proper excavation work.

Use of stone tools by pre-historic people is well known. Discovery of stone tools revolutionised the study of India's pre-history. Ruined civilization of Padarbeda/Kachhimdola and Deundi in Kalahandi would after proper excavation work may give proper light on the ages. For, it may throw enormous light on how hunter-gatherers made these tools and used them to butcher animals, dig out tubers, tap sap from

plants and so on. The pre-historic man was so skilful that he made a variety of these tools: hand-axes, cleavers, discoids, scrapers, choppers, knives and so on. Very few number of stone tools have been discovered.

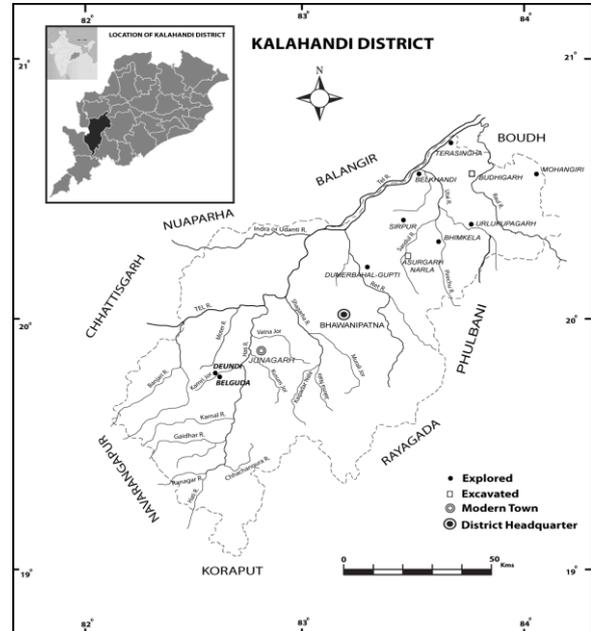


Fig 1: Distribution of Early Historic Sites

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