

Archaeological Exploration of the Kusumi River Valley: Insights from Unearthed Sites in Nayagarh District

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Abstract: *The present study on unearthed archaeological sites around Kusumi River, which is considered to be one of the major tributaries of river Mahanadi, filled with archaeological settlement remains and monuments. The Kusumi River has been played a significant role in the history of Nayagarh District, Odisha. The bank of Kusumi River was overflowed due to flood in that river which created fertility of the soil. The fertility of the soil helped in ample production of crops which sustained in the life of the people of that land and contributed to the growth of socio - politici - economic and cultural life of people Nayagarh district. This river originated from Bhanjanagar (Panchabuti) and it falls at bhatgarh near Kantilo the famous for Nilamadhava Vishnu temple in the river Mahanadi. The Kusumi river is dotted with for archaeological remains. we also found some number of on unearthed archaeological sites, which basically appeared on the banks of river Kusumi, such as Asuradhupa on the right bank of Kusumi river near Sarankula, Ralabagarh on the left bank of Kusumi river near the village of Ambapada and last one is paikabankatara, on the left bank of Kusumi river near Dhalamaska. Although, these sites are not excavated still now but I have found some archaeological artefacts. From a small exploration, such as two hand axes and different types and different shapes potsherds like bowl, rim part of potteries ant etc.*

Keywords: Archaeological remains, artefacts, exploration, excavation, artefacts, stone tools, pottery, Nayagarh, Kusumi river

1. Introduction

The essence of the archaeology is that it makes our world much more meaningful and resourceful. Generally, Archaeology is the study of past through material remains which have left by the people. The term archaeology is come from Greek word. The term archaeology is composed with two Greek words, such as “Archaeos” means the ancient or past and “logos” means discussion or science¹. When we discuss about the definition of archaeology, the name of K. V. Raman comes first, according to him Archaeology studies the story of man’s past through his material remains². D. K. Bhattacharya said that the archaeology it basically means the study of antiquities. In an extended sense, the study of archaeology means the reconstruction of the history of a region. V. K. Jain defines the archaeology is a study of human past as revealed in the material remains such as tools, weapons, household, articles, ornaments, buildings and burials etc³. According to William s. Dancey, Archaeology is a field of study that seeks answers to questions about the nature of human culture and society as it existed in particular times in the past, and about culture and social change⁴.

The study of archaeology was started when the man took interest to known his past, who is he, how did he come, how did the earth create and how did he become civilised or socialised from animals like many more questions enforced him to find out the answers of his questions. As a result, he was able to get all the answer of his questions when he began to study the artifacts like stone tool, potteries, and rock paintings etc. Eventually, this study led towards a separate discipline is called archaeology.

In India archaeology was started in 18th century and developd⁵. However, today we could have reached in time of

science and technology. Those have made possible to find out the answers which were raised in his mind once often a day. Anyhow the archaeological evidence or data are very agential for archaeologist to reconstruct the history; culture, tradition and the subsistence pattern of any community and anytime or place. The things which have made used and modified by human being is called artefact. Those are sources of our information’s. These artefacts are so many types such as stone tools, bone tools, potteries and wood implement like etc. the artefacts are found on the basic of location such as potteries from habitational sites, rock painting from caves and hand axe in the hill. According to this archaeologist have categories the archaeological sites in many numbers. Among them, open area archaeological sites, caves sites, river valley sites and unearthed archaeological sites.

Archaeology has remarkable strides revealing the obscure human history. It has traced back its antiquity to the prehistoric period and established the fact that the land in and around Kusumi river which is flourished in Nayagarh district and fall at Kantilo in Mahanadi. The land is affluent in archaeological remains which are scattered throughout the district. Archaeology is main tool for digging out different aspects of history and culture of the land. Through archaeological exploration many things have been come out which is very much helpful for writing the history of Odisha in general and Nayagarh district in particular. Many ancient remains have been explored during my field study. So far, the study is concern it is imperative on my part to analysis the explored sites such as Ralabagarh, Asuradhupa, Paikabankara, Nepalagarh, Podagarh,

Ralabagarh

Ralabagarh was a small area of Nayagarh. This place near Ambapada village, 7 kilometers distance from Bhahadajhola and 40 kilometres fro Headquarter of Nayagarh present day.

The Ralabagarh was one of the eight Gadajatas of Nayagarh state. This site has a great historic and archaeological value. But now this place has changed to forest or in habitational area. Though the people are not living here but their remains have left here those are became archaeological evidence for archaeologist. It is completely an archaeological mound or open area site (*Fig. 1*). This mound is approximately 10 - 15 ft height from the plain surface. At present the Ralabagarh is surrounded by the deep forest. The local people believe that the king of Nayagarh was built a royal palace here. Whereas the land of Ralabagarh is as unearthened archaeological site so we cannot find much more evidence on the royal palace. But for a surface exploration we found some remains those lead to prove that this place was habitation site at that time.

Archaeological remains at Ralabagarh

We know that this place is an unearthened archaeological site. If it would excavate then we would be able to reconstruct the history, culture and tradition of that people. After all I have explored to the surface of Ralabagarh personally and it surprised that I found a lot of pot shards from the surface of this place. Archaeologically it is proved that the potteries are the first remarkable indication of any early historical archaeological site. Therefore, this site may be an early historical site on the basis of the potteries. Among the pot sherds some important and relevant fragmented part of potteries are such as, Black wares with decorations, red wares with decorations, fragmented terracotta lamp, Intact bowl and terracotta lamp.

There are much more similarities between the pot sherds of Ralabagarh and the early historical site Sisupalgarh at Bhubaneswar. The Black wares with decoration are found on the surface of Ralabagarh its designs are incised linings around the rim. Under the lining designs appeared a line of micro arrow marks (*Fig. 2*). In Sisupalgarh also found the most distinctive type of vessel and one which can be called typical of the Sisupalgarh culture is a "knobbed" vessel, possibly a bowl - cum - lid, usually in grey or greyish black ware with or without concentric grooving's on the inner base⁶.

From Ralabagarh also found red wares with decorations those parts are the rim portion of the pottery. This design is incised line and saw teeth like designs are decorated in some pot sherds (*Fig. 3*). The Sisupalgarh also found red wares with decorations such as, Red - slipped shard, decorated with oblique slashes, dull red - slipped sherd decorated⁷.

A fragmented of terracotta lamp also noticed at Ralabagarh which is fully decorated (*Fig. 4*). If we discuss on Sisupalgarh we don't found evidence of terracotta lamp. So, it is a salient feature of the Ralabagarh on unearthened archaeological site.

Besides these, there are many sherds and well preserved bowl (*Fig. 5*), lamp (*Fig. 6*) and potteries collected from Ralabagarh. The bowl is approximately looking as similar as the fragments of bowl from Sisupalgarh. Which is famous for name of knobbed ware but the knobbed design is not characterised of Ralabagarh are found only on the surface area.

Asuradhupa Chalcolithic Site

In Indian context, the chalcolithic site was discovered and excavation after the Independence of India. The first chalcolithic site of India is Jorwe. This site situated in Ahmadnagar district of Maharashtra was discovered by S. A. Sali, but it was excavated by H. D. Sankhalia. So far as archaeological research of Odisha is concerned, excavation at Mayurbhanja conducted in 1948 by Bose and Sen, brought to lime light a series of eight localities such as Kuliya tank A and B, Kamata quarry C, Kolabaria and others. Excavation on this site yielded adequate lithic assemblage. The first evidence of chalcolithic culture in Odisha comes from the excavation conducted at Sankerjang in Angul district by Paul Yule of German and B. K. Rath of department of state Archaeology, Odisha and found for the first time the existence of a chalcolithic site, Golabai another site on Mandakini valley in Khurda district was excavated in 1991 by B. K. Sinha, archaeological survey of India excavation branch IV, Bhubaneswar⁸.

Asuradhupa is a Neo - Chalcolithic site situated on the right bank on the Kusumi River valley, near Saranakul of Nayagarh district of Odisha. It is located 13 kilometres distance from district Headquarter Nayagarh. The site Asuradhupa is a mound (*Fig. 7*). It is not excavated still today. The mound is approximately 7 - 10 ft height from the plain surface. The surface of this mound contains a lot of pot sherds like Black and red ware, black ware, red ware and grey ware (*Fig. 8*). In the shape of rim, base and body part this remains indicate its archaeological values. If taken to excavate the site properly in future it may increase the archaeological prosperity of the state of Odisha.

Paikabankatara

The Neolithic culture was the last or transition phase of Stone Age. The ground and polished stone tools and pottery were the main feature of this phase. The term "Neolithic" was first used by the Danish prehistorians; Thomsen, in the 19th century to denote the stage of technological progress achieved by early man. But it was Gordon Childe who highlighted the true socio - economic significance of these cultures by associating them with the emergence of the practice of plant cultivation and animal domestication leading to the growth of farming communities and settled village life. He used the term "Neolithic Revolution" to emphasize this progress. He also argued that farming was first invented in a "single" nuclear region" in Mesopotamia or near - East from where it diffused and spread to India and other parts of the world.

The first find of a Neolithic celt in India was made in 1842 by LeMasurier in the Raichur district of Karnataka and later by John Lubbock in 1867 in the Brahmaputra valley of upper Assam⁹.

The cultural fossil of the Neolithic period is essentially the polished stone tool besides other relics. The recovery of these tools in considerable number has drawn attention of the scholars since 1922 when the first neolith was picked up by P. Acharya from Baidyapur, his home village in Mayurbhanj and other places of Orissa (1925 - 1943). Subsequently Mohanty (1925 - 26), Mohapatra (1934 - 35), Worman (1938 - 39), Bose (1940), Patnaik (1942 - 43), Sharm (1952), B. Acharya (1953), Dutta - majumdar (1955), G. C. Mohapatra (1957 - 59), Mitra, Ghosh and Chakravarty (1958 - 59), Thapar (1961

- 62), Mitra (1962), Dash (1965 - 87), Tripathy (1967 - 1987), Prusty (1972) followed his footprints in course of their explorations. Sahoo (1987 - 88) and Singh (1973 - 90) who have discovered six and nineteen sites respectively in Cuttack and Dhenkanal districts through their persistent efforts added to the list of sites. Rath and Nath (1985 - 86) located Golabai and Misra (1989) found Gopalpur in course of their explorations¹⁰.

Nayagarh is also a land of archaeological sources. It is found from prehistorical period to early historic and medieval period such as Asuradhipa near Saranakul is a chalcolithic site, Ralabagarh near Bahadajhola is an early historical period and we found many temple architectures from medieval period such as Jagannath temple at Khandapada, Nilamadhava temple at Kantilo, Kaunri Devi temple at Gobindpur and Chandeswari temple at Kural.

Paikabankata near Odagaon is such an important Neolithic site a Nayagarh district (Fig.9) which site is under my research work. It an unearthed archaeological site from a small exploration we found such stone tools on the surface. These stone tools are typically Neolithic tools. In Orissa there are fourteen Neolithic tool types recorded as per their availability which have been classified using the above - mentioned terminologies. These are axe, adze, chise, soulded tool, ring - stone, muller, corn - crusher or freak, flakes indeterminate tool portions, and rejects¹¹.

Among all these tools the Chisels are collected from the Neolithic site Paikabankatara (Fig.10). This Chisels are small in size, polished in nature and having very sharp edge. Both chisels are unifacial in shape. One of them crude chisels which indicate that it is earlier than other one. Because two one is more polished than the first.

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Photographs



Figure 1: Ralabagarh Mound



Figure 2: Black wares with decoration at Ralabagarh



Figure 3: Red ware with decoration at Ralabagarh



Figure 4: A fragmented of terracotta lamp

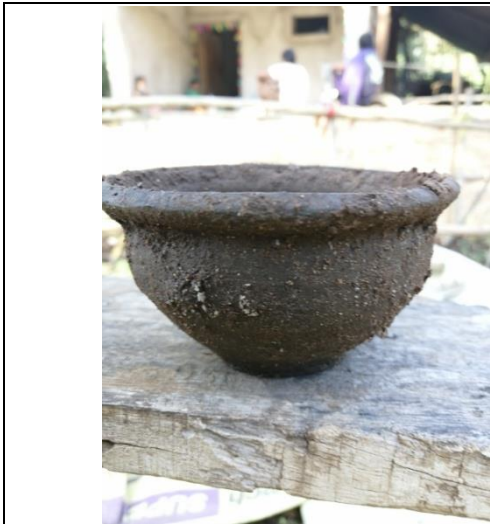


Figure 5: Intach Bowl



Figure 6: Terracotta Lamp



Figure 7: Asuradhipa Mound



Figure 8: Decorated Sherds



Figure 9: Paikabankatara Mound



Figure 10: two chisels