

Brief Notes on Excavated Sites in Lucknow Circle

1. Excavation at Bhita, Distt. Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh(1997-98)

From a very remote past Bhita attracted the attention of the archaeologists. Alexander Cunningham was the first scholar to visit the site in the year 1872 and cut a section through the rampart on the south-eastern side of chief mound (Garh) in order to examine the defenses of the old town. Being attracted by the reports of Cunningham, John Marshall started fresh excavation here in the year 1909-11. He failed to identify the cultural-sequence below the N.B.P. level and dated the site not earlier than 4th century B.C.

Thus, with a view to trace out the cultural assemblages prior to N.B.P. deposit an attempt has been made to reach the natural soil on the fortified mound (Garha) and the lower mound (Garhi) outside the fortified area.

The earliest period of this mound is represented by a 20cm thin deposit of black slipped ware deposit datable to 8th to 7th B.C., followed by Northern Black Polished Ware (1.75mt. deposit) dated as the beginning of 7th century B.C. to 2nd Century B.C.

No structural activities were encountered in the lower most level but three phases of structural activities have been noticed in the N.B.P. level, which are made of burnt brick 50x30x7cm. varying in size and plan. The orientations of these structures are east-west, facing mainly west. From mid to the late phase, a large number of structures most of them at freely built were encountered. Square rooms (2.45x2.30Mt) with provisions of window within a rectangular compartment, is the unique feature of this period. Covered drain and rammed floor are also noticeable within these structures. In the last phase, definite plan of any structures has not been encountered, bricks are mainly reuse and devoid of any proper shape and size. The structural activity of the Kushan period is not well marked in the Garhi mound, but in Garha mound, where deep vertical structure of rectangular walls and cistern having a measurement of 2.10x2.02x0.56mt. with 38 courses of brick deserve special mention.

In the periods I and II, the site represents finished specimens of black slipped and Northern Black Polished ware along with a few pieces of grey and associated red wares. But the appearance of N.B.P. in period II shows colour variations ranging from black and grey to brown and a few pieces of golden to yellow having highly lustrous polish. Other associated wares include chocolate ware, orange ware, black and red ware. Even Ahichhatra XA(10A) type pottery and miniature bowls have been found from this level in a greater quantity.

A good number of antiquities, having wider variety have also been encountered from Bhita. They are mainly of terracotta, copper, Bone, Iron and stone. Among the terracotta objects most important are human and animal figurines, beads, rattle, wheel, stopper, weight, toy cart, hopscotch etc. Few copper coins (much defaced) and a handful number of antimony rods, bone points needles, few iron slags, and very a beads of semi-precious stones, are other important antiquities that deserve mention.

2. Excavation of Garha, Village Kurwar, District Sultanpur (1987)

A small scale excavation at Garha was undertaken during the year 1986. The site is located on the river Gomti in Sadar Tahsil of district Sultanpur. Trial trenches were laid in the year 1987.

The pottery found at Garha consists of black-slipped ware, NBP ware and associated wares. Besides, sherds of red ware and medieval glazed sherds were found. The earliest habitation of this site can be dated to the middle of first millennium BC. The structural remains belong to subsequent period. Occurrence of glazed ware at Garha is associated with the period of Muslim occupation in the area some time after the 12 Century A.D.

3. Excavation at Sapaur District Gonda (1998-99)

The excavation at Sapaur was undertaken by Lucknow circle of Archaeological Survey of India jointly with Lucknow University. The ancient site of Sapaur is situated in Colonelganj tehsil of District Gonda. The present village of Sapaur is located in the middle of an ancient mound, which is surrounded by two *nalas* known as Kakarahia *Nala* from three sides, joins river tehsil in the east.

Seven trenches of 10m x 10m were laid out on different parts of the mound. A fourfold cultural sequence was obtained during the excavation. Period I is represented by NBPW, Black slipped ware, grey ware and red ware. The antiquities found in this cultural period are terracotta: animal figurines, discs, bangles, stone weights, beads, pestles, balls and mullers, bone arrow-head, antlers, copper antimony rods, bangles, iron nails, spear heads, glass, bangles and beads. Period II assigned to Kusana era is represented by red ware and black ware in medium fabric. The antiquities found in this cultural phases are terracotta figurines, beads, terracotta, marbles, animal bones and iron implements. Period III belongs to Gupta era, represented by red ware. Brick bats, terracotta human figurines, marbles, bangles and pendants are the main antiquities of this horizon. A square plan of brick temple surrounded by 75cm wide- *pradakshinapatha*, was unearthed in the eastern portion of the mound with a Sivalinga on the surface above a big platform. A few broken sculptures of sandstone are also found. Period IV assignable to early medieval and medieval period is represented by red ware only. Copper coin, terracotta figurines, beads and marbles are antiquities found in this cultural phase. Thick ash deposit found in almost all the trenches indicates that the habitation was destroyed by fire.

4. Excavation at Erich, Jhansi (1989)

The excavation at Erich was undertaken by the Lucknow circle of Archaeological Survey of India. The site is located on the right bank of the river Betwa in the Garautha Tehsil of district Jhansi. At the site, total 19 layers were identified. Period I is characterized by plain black-and-red and black-slipped wares and is devoid of iron or any other associated wares. No antiquity was reported from the regular layers but a pit sealed by this habitational deposit yielded lumps of copper, a bone point and also a *ghata-shaped* terracotta bead.

Period II is characterized by the appearance of NBP ware. The thickness of the

habitational deposit of the period is 2.60 metres. The associated wares are black-and-red, black-slipped and red wares as well as an orange ware. The minor antiquities included beads of terracotta, one six-faceted boconical crystal bead, terracotta disc, bangle piece, pendant, hopscotch, stone ball, bone stylus, copper coin, *ghata-shaped* terracotta bead, glass bangle piece, terracotta mother goddess, skin rubber and numerous iron objects such as nails with square section, etc. Houses were built perhaps of bamboo, plastered with mud as attested to by the find of mud clods with reed impression. In upper levels, remains of burnt brick structures were found.

Period III is marked by Kushana wares and typical pottery such as the inkpot, sprinkler, knife-edged bowls and carinated *handi* and other associated red wares with utilitarian shapes. Evidence of structural activity was in form of remains of a wall built of burnt bricks, which conform in measurement to the Kushana brick. The thickness of the habitational deposit is 1.50 metre.

The most significant find from these levels was that of a terracotta seal having inscription in Brahmi characters of the Kushana period reading '*Samghasya*' suggesting the existence of a monastic establishment. The other antiquities include ivory bangle piece, a miniature terracotta bull figure, a bone stylus, copper antimony rod and iron objects.

Period IV could tentatively be assigned to the Gupta period. Of this period belonged a residential burnt brick structure and also some typical terracotta figurines. Other antiquities from this level are a copper coin, terracotta ear stud, *ghata-shaped* bead, pendant, ivory miniature vase, bone point, shell bangle, arecanut-shaped bead and numerous iron objects. Deposits of this period were much disturbed due to brick robbing and huge pits.

No clear cut division of habitation subsequent to the Gupta period could be worked out due to the mixed material. Medieval pottery comprised a few glazed ware sherds at the top level. Tentatively, the whole deposit could be assumed to be early medieval and the structural activities on top of the mound taking place sometime during the Indo-Islamic period between the twelfth and fourteenth century AD.

5. Excavation at Aunahan, District Kanpur Dehat(1995)

A small scale excavation at Aunahan was undertaken by the Lucknow circle of Archaeological Survey of India in 1995. The mound is located on the western fringe of the village Aunahan. The total area of the mound is approximately 27 *bighas* with a maximum height of 12m from the surrounding ground level. The habitational deposit could be divisible into five periods. Period I: Mauryan, *circa 4th* century BC to first century BC; Period II: late phase of Kushan period, 3rd century AD; Period III: Gupta and post-Gupta, *circa 4th* century to 7th century AD; Period IV; early medieval, *circa 8th* century AD to twelfth century AD; Period V: Sultanate, *circa 12th* century to fifteenth century.

Period I is represented by a few plain red ware sherds of early historical period. Antiquities from the deposit consisted of only one arrow-head and a terracotta hopscotch. No structural remains were encountered during this period. However, on typological ground, the material remains of this period could safely be assigned a time-bracket from *circa 4th*

century BC to first century BC.

Period II has been assigned a period of circa 3rd century AD. This deposit was characterized by a red ware pottery of late phase of Kushan period. In later stage structures of re-used Kushan bricks have been encountered.

The occupational deposit of Period III is represented by red ware. This period was also marked by the presence of terracotta animal figurines and wheel, broken iron objects and a bone pendant.

Burnt-brick structures built of re-used bricks were exposed partially. Two walls of a structure with twelve courses have been noticed. Another structures with north-south orientation in the same trench contained two courses of re-used bricks measuring 22cmx 18cmx5cm with a total length of 1.50m and a width of 34cm.

The occupational deposit of Period IV was marked by the occurrence of red ware pottery. The antiquities comprised terracotta objects such as, gamesman, grinder, ear-studs, balls, beads, animal figurines, skin-rubber, wheels, iron objects, glass and lac bangles, stone pendant and stone object. Burnt-brick structures, laid in mud-mortar, were also noticed in this period.

Period V was the last occupational period of the site which could be datable between *circa* 12th century and 15th century AD. The antiquities from Period V comprised terracotta animal figurines, glass bangles, etc. The structures of re-used bricks were also noticed just on the top of the mound. Special mention may be made of one small-sized structure with six courses, measuring 96x89 cm, roughly square on plan and was built of broken bricks. There was also traced a hole (dia 26 cm) with ashy deposit.