

# **EXCAVATIONS**

## **Brief Notes on Excavated Sites in Lucknow Circle**

### **1. Excavation at Sapaur District Gonda (1998-99)**

The excavation at Sapaur was undertaken jointly with Lucknow University. The ancient site of Sapaur situated in Colonelganj tehsil. 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 periods 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 remains of this horizon. A square plan of brick temple surround by 75Cm wide- *Pradakshinapatha*, was unearthed in the eastern portion of the mound with a siva-linga 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 which found in this cultural phase. Thick ash deposit found in almost all the trenches indicates that the habitation was destroyed by fire.

## **2. Excavation at Erich, Jhansi (1989)**

The excavation at Erich was done under the directorship of Shri H. N. Singh. 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 to the natural soil. The thickness of deposit of 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 in 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 orange coloured 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 the 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 included 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 was 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 of 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.

The following tentative time bracket may be assigned to the different periods at the site.

I.	Pre-NBP Period	Pre 600 BC
II.	NBP Period	600-200 BC
III.	Sunga-Kushana Period	200 BC-AD
IV.	Gupta Period	AD 300-600
V.	Early medieval Period	AD 600-
VI.	Indo-Islamic Period	Post AD

### **3. Excavation at Aunahan, District Kanpur Dehat (1995)**

A small scale excavation at Aunahan was under the Directorship of Shri G. T. Shendey. 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 habitation deposit could be divisible into five periods viz. Period I: Mauryan, *circa* 4<sup>th</sup> century BC to first century BC; Period II: late phase of Kushan, 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD; Period III: Gupta and post-Gupta, *circa* 4<sup>th</sup> century to 7<sup>th</sup> century AD; Period IV; early medieval, *circa* 8<sup>th</sup> century AD to twelfth century AD; Period V: Sultanate, *circa* 12<sup>th</sup> 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* 4<sup>th</sup> century BC to first century BC.

Period II has been assigned a time, i.e. *circa* 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. This deposit was characterized by a red ware pottery of late phase of Kushan period. Only antiquity recovered in later period, 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 the orientation of north-south in the same trench contained two courses of reused 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* 12<sup>th</sup> century and 15<sup>th</sup> 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

#### **4. Excavation at Orajhar, district Balrampur, Uttar Pradesh year (1999-2000)**

The Lucknow Circle, of the Survey, under the co-direction of R.S. Fonia and *Shed. Jamal Hasan*, assisted by Nayan Anand Chakraborty, Sangita Chakraborty, Lily Dhasmana, Rajeev Dwivedi, S.B. Shukla, S.K. Arora, Ravi Sankar Saxena, carried out excavation at Orajhar. As the eastern, western and northern parts of the mound of Orajhar were previously excavated by A. Cunningham, a small-scale excavation was taken up in the center and southern parts, with a view to re-examining the sequence earlier drawn by Cunningham besides tracing the remains of 'Purvarama' or Eastern monastery' of lady Vishakha, a disciple of Lord Buddha. Three distinct cultural periods belonging to Kushan. Gupta and

medieval, were exposed. Of these, Period I revealed a monastic-complex in the form of small cells of Kushan period having brick-paved floors (37 X 24 X 5 cm). One noteworthy feature is the evidence of entrance and staircases in the southern part of the mound, proceeding towards the center. The center of the mound must have been occupied by a structure having some association with the Buddhist people of Period I, but later on this structure was destroyed by the succeeding periods. All these cells had brick paved flooring, due to the passage of time which were found missing and damaged. Towards the corner of the western side, another entrance showing four staircase were exposed. With evidence of broken pillars (for supporting roofs). The cells are uniform in size (1.2 in width X 1.75 m length). Likewise, the cells of the western side are also uniform in size (2.05 m to 1.80m). The cells are surrounded by enclosure wall. Due to erratic digging by A. Cunningham, the structures of northern and eastern parts of the mound were highly disturbed. During the Kushan period, these cells were constructed all around the mound as could be noticed from the nature of slope showing an impression of tier-like structure. As indicated by the diggings, these early settlers occupied the entire mound. The structural activity of Period II is characterized by the presence of a square plinth of Gupta Temple (6.20 m X 6.20 m), ornamented moulded pilasters at an interval of 1.07 m towards the northern, western and southern sides. The entrance of the temple is probably towards the east, but due to superimposition of the later structure it could not be properly exposed. The height and width of the pilasters are 35 m and 42 m which resemble the excavated temple of Sahet at Sravasti. The entire temple is enclosed by a boundary wall (14.70 m in the EW and 12.80 m in the NS direction). The space in-between the boundary wall and the temple was used as a circumbulatory passage *pradakshina patha*. On the basis of these remains Cunningham surmised that the total height of the temple might be around 37 m. The people of Period III used the earlier Kushan bricks to construct the paved floor. Towards the western part of the temple two almost square platforms (1.80 X 1.80 north-west corners and 1.60 X 1.30 m south-west corner) deserve mention. The reused Kushan bricks along with Gupta bricks were utilized. The architectural feature, orientation and position of these structures have raised doubts about their exact function and the relationship with the temple. The structural remains of Period III are

subdivided into phase 3A and 3B. Above the plinth of the Gupta temple, another square platform-like structure was exposed with eight bricks comprising the reused bricks of Kushan and Gupta periods. The length and width of this structure are 2.15 X 3.90 m. almost at the center of this platform there is a hollow having a diameter of 1.5 m. The structure appears peculiar due to its rounded (four brick courses) top and square bottom (seventeen brick courses). The bricks of the upper part are narrower in one side and wider in the other. The barn-like structure raised purposely above the compact earth probably for storing grains. In case of structural phase 3B the foundation of 3A was utilized, on which a star-shaped platform of a temple (6.30 X 5.75 m) was built with reused Gupta bricks, with the sizes varying from 23 X 14.5, 12 X 21.5m etc. The entire structure is surrounded by a boundary wall containing square projections on all the three sides except southwestern part. These square projections contain fourteen to seventeen brick courses. Towards the extreme north a nineteenth century grave was exposed. All the structures are made of mud-mortar. The antiquities retrieved from the excavation are terracotta arecanut bead, fragmentary-Y animal figurine, and a pestle from the Kushana level. Another peculiar round terracotta object having three depressions on the upper part was found perhaps used as a ritual object. Though apparently, it looks like a lid of a pot, but according to the local tradition, these ritual objects are presently used for votive purpose known as 'Dabar Baba'. Few eroded copper g grins, one iron ring, round metal disc and a few British coins were found in Period III while Period II is devoid of any antiquity. Among the pottery shapes, sprinkler, vase bowl, inkpot-type lid miniature pot, basin, corrugated bowl, starnped pottery of typical kushan period, arc noteworthy. From the Gupta period, a few blunt-edged bowl of dull red colour were recovered. From Period I various shapes like jar, basin, lid, spout of dull red colour in medium to coarse fabric were collected.

## **5.Ancient Site Piprahwa and Ganwaria, Distt. Siddharth Nagar, U.P. (2012-13)**

The ancient site of Piprahwa and Ganwaria are located near the Indo-Nepal border in Naugarh tehsil of district Siddharth Nagar (U.P.) and famous for earliest Buddhist stupa and other remains. These sites were earlier excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India between 1971 and 1977 under the guidance of Shri K.M. Srivastava.

The recent excavation was intended to confirm the earlier cultural sequence to know the habitational extension of the site.

On the basis of the available data, the cultural sequence of the site may be tentatively divided into four periods.

### **Period I (Pre-NBPW)**

Ceramics of this period include black slipped ware, red slipped ware, chocolate slipped ware, black and red ware, red ware and corded ware. The shapes include bowl, dish, water vessel, basin and perforated pot, etc.

### **Period II (NBPW)**

The remains of this period have been found in almost all the trenches. Ceramics of this period include Northern Black Polished ware, black slipped ware, grey ware, red slipped ware, chocolate slipped ware and red ware. Important shapes of this period include bowl, dish, basin, water vessel, lipped bowl/basin, etc.

### **Period III (Sunga period)**

Ceramics of this period include black slipped ware, grey ware and red ware and the shapes include storage pot, water vessels, spouted pots, dish, bowl, carinated pot, lid, miniature pot, etc. remains of floors made of brick jelly were also noticed from the levels of this period.

### **Period IV (Kushana period)**

Ceramics of this period include red ware, grey ware and black slipped ware and the shapes include large sized pots, carinated pots, bowl, dish, basin, handled

pot, inkpot type lid, miniature pot, etc. Several brick structures and floors were also noticed in this period.

Beads of terracotta and stone, stone weight, copper coins of Kushana period, human terracotta figurines, terracotta figurines of animal and bird, ritual pots, hopscotch, terracotta wheel, iron nail, antimony rod, fragments of terracotta bangle, bone arrow heads and points, stone pestle, etc. are the important antiquities recovered during excavation.

### **6.Trial Excavation at Ancient Site, Daundiya Khera, Distt. Unnao** **(2013-14)**

The trial excavation of ancient site Daundiakhera was initiated following the directions received through letter No. 12/1/2013-EE dated 9.10.2013.

The excavation was started on 18.10.2013 in the Trench YB1Qdt. III. Before commencement of the trial excavations, two points has been identified with the help of Geological Survey of India (GSI) team marked as two quadrants of trenches YB1 (III) and XA2(III). The trench was exposed up to the level of calcareous formation found at a depth of 4.90 m. This natural calcareous deposit was further cut through in a limited area measuring 1.50 x 2.50 m up to the depth of 5.93m. from the surface level. The excavation has exposed layers 1 to 9 yielding cultural deposit marked with mixed pottery of different periods ranging from medieval period to early historical period below which was found the natural soil.

Three structural phases and two floor levels were noticed during the excavation.

In addition to that, excavation of the Trench YB1, quadrant III of the Trench XA2 was also started on 01.11.2013, being the second potential area as specified by the GSI team. It was dug out upto the depth of 6.10m (from the surface) striking natural soil in the last dig. Total 12 habitational layers were recorded in this trench yielding cultural assemblage consisting of BSW and associated red ware sherds, rusticated coarse red ware and black and red ware with NBP finish which

included table wares, cooking wares and storage pots. Areca nut bead from late levels and a number of hopscotch and two bone points, are the antiquities recovered from this trench.

The excavations conducted upto earliest habitational deposit at the site have indicated the antiquity of the site going back to the about first millennium B.C. as attested by the pottery, structural remains, and other associated finds.