

Neolithic Potteries from the Excavated Site of Bang-Harirajpur, Coastal Odisha

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Abstract: During the last few decades, a number of Neolithic sites have been excavated in different parts of Odisha to understand the emergence of Early Farming Communities in the region. These sites include Golabai Sasan, Suabarei, Kuchai and Hikudi, etc. Excavation was also conducted at the site of Bang-Harirajpur in Coastal Odisha for two seasons which yielded Neolithic remains. The main objective of this paper is to provide a descriptive account of the Neolithic Potteries of Bang-Harirajpur.

Keywords: Neolithic, Pottery, Excavation, Odisha, Early farming

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Introduction

The study on Neolithic Culture in Odisha was initiated after the discovery of Neolithic artefacts by P. Acharya 1923-24 in Baidyapur. But the excavation at Kuchai conducted by B.K. Thapar (1964) provided

stratigraphic sequence of Neolithic culture for the first time in Odisha. Subsequent excavations in sites like Golabai Sasan (Sinha 1993, 1997, 2000, Mohanty *et al* 2012), Bang-Harirajpur (Pattanayak 2013, Singh 2013, Basa *et al* 2014), Suabarei (Pattnaik 2016) and Hikudi (Behera and Thapar 2016) have yielded remains of Neolithic Period. Besides these excavations, exploration conducted in sites of Gopalpur (Kar 2000), Bajpur (Das 1995; Mohanta 1995; Basa *et al* 2000), Baragaon (Behera 2000) and Badibahal (Pradhan 2000) have also yielded some evidence about the Neolithic Culture of Odisha. The main objective of this paper is to summarize the Neolithic pottery remains which were recovered from the site of Bang-Harirajpur. However, a brief account of some of the excavated Neolithic sites of Odisha is given below to bring proper perspective.

Some Excavated Neolithic Sites in Odisha

The excavation of Neolithic sites has yielded various kinds of evidences which include ground and polished stone artefacts, pottery remains, bone tools, terracotta objects, traces of floors, animal remains and plant remains.

Golabai Sasan: (20° 01' N, 85° 33' E)

Golabai Sasan is a Neolithic-Chalcolithic site located in Khordha district on the left bank of the river Mandakini, a tributary of the river Daya. B.K. Sinha was the director of this excavation (Sinha 2000). Surface explorations in the years 1986 and 1987 resulted in the recovery of polished stone tools, bone pieces and painted pottery. Then trial excavations in 1991 showed the evidence of good cultural remains consisting of polished stone tools and bone tools in association with pottery remains. The cultural period of this site is divided into three periods. They are Period I: Neolithic, Period IIA: Osteo-Chalcolithic and Period IIB: Ferro-Chalcolithic.

Period-I (Neolithic) consists of five layers in trench. In this period no stone tool was found, but some bone tools were recovered, like piercer, pieces of antler and pieces of mineralized bones. Pottery recovered from this period was both handmade and wheel made. It consisted of Dull Red Ware, Red Slipped Ware and Grey Ware. Handmade pottery was decorated with chord or reed impressions. The shapes included shallow bowls, dishes and vases.

Suabarei: (Lat. 20° 09' 14" N; Long. 85° 48' 33" E)

Suabarei archaeological mound is located in the fertile plain in between river Daya and Gangua rivulet. It was excavated by J. Pattnaik of ASI. The cultural deposit of Suabarei is divided into two periods, Period-I- Neolithic and Period-II- Chalcolithic with a clear-cut hiatus between the two periods. Period-II is further sub-divided into Period-IIA- Incipient Chalcolithic, Period-IIB- Mature Chalcolithic and Period-IIC- Late Chalcolithic, on the basis of recovered material remains. The antiquities included stone tools, such as axe, adze, celt, pestle etc., bone tools, pottery, terracotta, beads, copper objects and faunal remains. Various structural remains were also recovered (Pattnaik 2016). The Neolithic period is represented by a solitary piece of ground tool and polished stone chisel in association with grit tempered handmade potsherds of Red Ware.

Kuchai: (22° 04' N 86° 36' E)

Kuchai (22° 04' N 86° 36' E) site is located 8k.m. north of the Baripada town in Mayurbhanj district. It was excavated by B.K. Thapar in 1961-62. The site has yielded Neolithic artifacts in association with coarse grit tempered Red Ware potsherds. The Neolithic artifacts included chisel, pounders, faceted hoe, mace head grinding stone and ground stone axe. Some potteries were red slipped and show

incised or fingertip decoration. Shouldered adze was recovered from the surface. The Neolithic level at Kuchai rested on top of a microlithic level (IAR 1961-62, Thapar 1978, 1986).

Hikudi: (20°5'17.74" N 83° 54'14.09" E)

The excavated site of Hikudi is situated on the left bank of the river Mahanadi in Subarnapur district of Odisha. It was explored during February-March 2000. The trial excavation revealed two phases, Period-I (Neolithic) and Period-II (Early Historic). The relics of the Neolithic period included ground and polished stone tools such as (chert blades, broken saddle querns, stone discs, ground stone axes,), pottery remains, bone point, terracotta animal figurines, sling ball, and a few animal skeletal remains (Behera and Thapar 2016). The potsherds were generally handmade and mainly cord impressed. The ware types included Orange-Red, Dull Red to Brownish, Reddish Grey and Grey Ware. Some potsherds had their upper part of the body chocolate slipped and burnished, while the lower half of the body was cord impressed. The fabrics of the potsherds were medium to coarse. The thickness of the cord mark on potteries varied from 1mm to 3mm. Besides these, some pots with wide mouthed jars and elliptical *handis* had cord mark impression on both inner and outer sides. The shapes included large sized vases, jars with flaring featureless rim, carinated/concave neck, vases and jars with vertical featureless rim, bowls with featureless rim, basins with flared internally thickened rim, vertical rounded and flat lid found. Various impressions like incision, appliqué, puncture and impression methods were applied on the potteries of shoulder part of *handi* and vases.

The site of Bang-Harirajpur is discussed below

Bang-Harirajpur: (20°5' - 20°10' N latitude and 85° 40' - 85° 45' E longitude)

The excavated site of Bang- Harirajpur is in the Khordha district. It is situated about 2.5 km to the south-east of the Khordha railway station and is about 25 km to the south-west of the capital city Bhubaneswar on the Sunderpada- Harirajpur road. The site was excavated by the Centre for Heritage Studies, Bhubaneswar in collaboration with Department of Anthropology, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar and Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute, Pune in the year 2012-13 and 2013-2014 and directed jointly by Kishor K. Basa and R. K. Mohanty. During the first season, the step trench method was followed by excavating five trenches each measuring 1.5m x 2m. During the second season in 2013-14, a trench measuring 5m x 5m was excavated. In the second season the previous year's trenches were also reopened.

Cultural Sequence

On the basis of pottery assemblages, lithic remains, existence of the circular huts, copper remains, skeletal remains and other associated finds, the site was divided into two periods with a continuing habitation of Neolithic to Chalcolithic period. Thus, Period-I is Neolithic and Period-II is Chalcolithic.

General Recoveries

The Neolithic period yielded lithic artefacts, potteries, plant and animal remains. From the Chalcolithic period, the relics recovered included lithic artefacts, pottery, bone tools, terracotta, copper, plant and animal remains. An important feature of excavation was the finding of a half circular structural remains with 18 post holes in a series. Recovery of three human skeletons including an adult male, an adult female and a prenatal child was the unique feature of this excavation. One spiral bead made of copper found on the neck of male skeleton was regarded as a grave good. The portion below the ankle chopped off in adult male skeleton reveals the practice of severing body portion before the burial.

The Neolithic potteries is discussed below

Neolithic Potteries of Bang-Harirajpur

As previously stated, the site has a continuous cultural habitation, and the potteries were recovered without any gap. In Neolithic Period the pottery remains included a good number of rim, body, and base sherd varieties. The potteries are generally coarse to medium fabric. Both handmade and moulded potteries were recovered. In the Neolithic Period, various kinds of surface treatments were found on the potteries like burnishing, slipping, corded and mat impression.

Ware types

The ware types included Dull Red Ware (DRW), Red Slipped Ware (RSW), Burnished Red Ware (BRW), Grey Ware (GW), Burnished Grey Ware (BGW), Cream Ware (CW) and Chocolate Slipped Red Ware (CSRW). Dull Red Ware is the dominant variety in this period followed by Red Slipped Ware (See Fig no 1 and 2).

Shapes

The shapes were of various types, such as, bowl, dish jar, basin, pot and shallow saucers. Among the bowls, there were simple feature less rim, inverted featureless rim in big bowl of Red Slipped Ware and slightly everted featureless rim of Grey Ware. Knife shaped rim and convex profile were found in Red Slipped Ware, convex profile is found in Dull Red Ware, flaring rim with concave neck of Dull Red Ware, outward rim with appliqué designs on the neck in the Red Slipped Ware among the jars, among the *handis* the shapes are splayed out rim. The shapes of Bowls are the dominating variety with featureless rim (See Fig no 1 and 2).

Some examples of potteries of Neolithic period are given below.

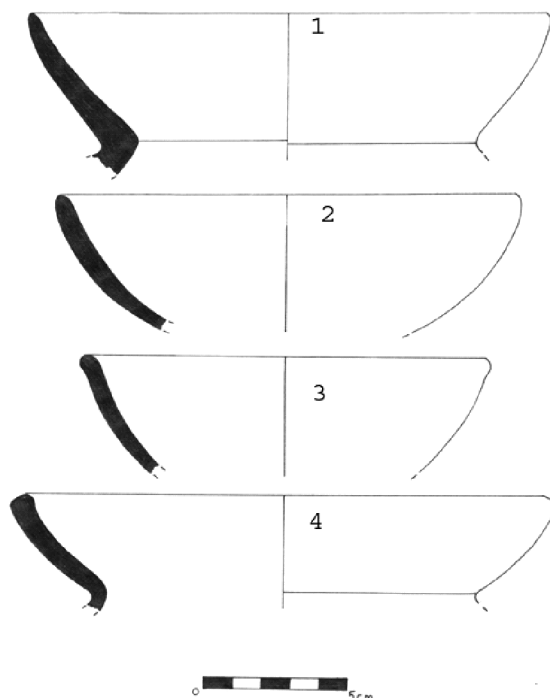


Fig. 1

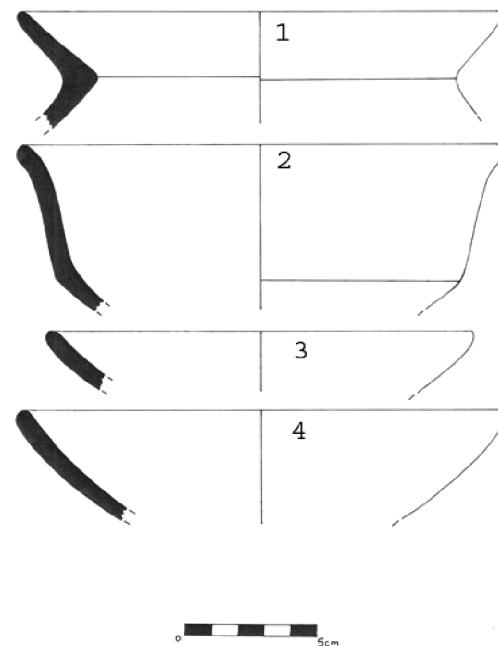


Fig. 2

Description of Fig no. 1

1. Fragment of a jar of Red Slipped Ware, constricted neck convex to outer surface, the rim is luted to the body, probably a globular body, throat has a corner point, slip from the throat to the outer surface of the rim, the marks on the surface indicate a piece of cloth or bunch of grass or another thing is used for applying slip, coarse fabric, ill fired.
2. Fragment of a bowl of Red Slipped Ware with featureless rim, rounded lip, round bottom, coarse fabric, ill fired.
3. Fragment of a bowl of Chocolate Slipped Red Ware with featureless rim, rounded lip, convex side, coarse fabric, ill fired.
4. Fragment of a jar of Dull Red Ware, constricted neck with convex profile, probably a globular body, coarse fabric, ill fired.

Description of Fig no. 2

1. Fragment of a *handi* of Red Slipped Ware with simple flared rim, rounded tip, constricted neck, straight profile, throat is prominent and angular, coarse fabric, ill fired.
2. Fragment of a small basin of Burnished Grey Ware with everted rim, round lip, carinated body, slip applied on interior and outer surface, burnishing after slip applied.
3. Fragment of a shallow saucer of Red Slipped Ware, featureless rim, round lip, slip applied both inner and outer surface, coarse fabric, ill fired.
4. Fragment of a bowl of Red Slipped Ware with simple featureless rim, round lip, slip applied both inner and outer surface, coarse fabric, ill fired.

Designs

Various designs such as painting, cord impression, reed impression, mat impression, appliqué design, etc. were found on potteries. Red ochre color painting was noticed on Chocolate Slipped Red Ware and Grey ware. The painting patterns were criss-crossed, horizontal, vertical lines and circles. Most of the potteries with cord impression were handmade and moulded. These are found in both Dull Red Ware and Grey Ware. The individual cord mark varies from 1mm to 3mm. The lid of this period was marked with solid lid stumps. Incised lines, oblique nail designs were also made on the upper surface of the pottery (See Plate No 1 and 2).



Plate 1: Designs on pottery



Plate 2: Cord Impressed pottery

Concluding Remark

Thus, an attempt has been made in this paper to document the Neolithic potteries of Bang- Harirajpur. These potteries were made from coarse clay and in slow wheel method. Besides, potteries of various sizes and shapes were made to fulfil the necessities of cooking, storing and ritualistic purpose, etc. The range of designs implying artistic temperament is also highlighted from this recovery. The present paper is relevant at least for two reasons. Firstly, it would help in the documentation of Neolithic potteries in Odisha as a whole. Secondly, such an account would also help compare the Chalcolithic potteries of coastal Odisha in general and Bang-Harirajpur in particular.

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