Dihar is the only excavated site of the Dwarakeswar river valley. The site has immense archaeological potential which led to repeated excavations at the site. In the present study, the site has been considered as a significant marker in understanding the rest of explored sites in the river valley. Dihar is considered to be one of the major chalcolithic sites of the district. This site is also counted as one of the major chalcolithic sites of Bengal. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to discuss the site in details together with the ceramic assemblage of the site which is considered to be the most important source of information in the present study. The entire chapter has been devoted to the site for mainly two reasons – Dihar being the only excavated site of the river valley has been regarded as a significant marker in understanding the explored sites of the river valley and secondly the potteries from the sites come from a stratigraphic context which has enabled the researcher to relate the explored pottery assemblage to the ones, collected from the site. The first part of the chapter attempts to highlight the exploration and the excavated data of the site and the second part has been entirely devoted to the discussion of the excavated ceramic assemblage of the site.

The modern village Dihar stands on the left bank of river Dwarakeswar, adjacent to a dry channel of the river locally called Kana-Nadi. The village is about 8 km north of Bishnupur and it falls within the Bishnupur Police Station. Dihar stands at the juncture of lateritic and the alluvial uplands. The average height from the Mean Sea Level is 60m. The village is a spot of tourist attraction due to the presence of the twin Siva temples of Sareswar and Saileswar. Annually the Gajan festival is celebrated with grandeur and this tradition is believed to have been observed since ages.

4.a. Antiquarian Survey:

The site had long ago received the attention of scholars on the basis of some explorations conducted by local antiquarians among whom Manick Lal Singha...
deserves special mention. His long enduring survey programs along the banks of the principal rivers like Damodar and Dwarakeswar helped in locating the archaeological sites throughout the district. He walked through these villages, communicated with the local people, carried out ethnographic surveys and collected each and every artefact from these villages. It is under his initiative and guidance, the local Museum—Bishnupur Acharya Jogesh Chandra Purakriti Bhavan (BAJCPB) was established. He tried to educate the local population and impart his knowledge to the young enthusiasts who also accompanied him in his surveys. These surveys were not only confined within the limits of the district Bankura but were simultaneously conducted in the districts of Midnapur, Purulia, Birbhum as well as in Bardhaman.

According to Singha, the former name of Dihar was Thakurpur but after the establishment of the twin temples at Sareswar and Saileswar, the village gained its name Dihar (Di: two, Har: Siva). Manick Lal Singha has identified a prehistoric and a historical phase at the site Dihar. He collected stone artefacts like celts, ringstones and microliths from the site and on the basis of these evidences he believed that Dihar maintained a communication with the upland areas, since there is no local outcrop of raw material in the vicinity. He also collected potsherds with stamped and incised designs, terracotta objects, copper and iron objects, shell objects, coins (punched mark, cast copper, and bent bar coins) and porcelain sherds from the site (Pl. I C, Pl. II A, B, Pl. III A & B) (Singha 1976). These artefacts were mostly collected as surface scatters and have no contextual reference. Nevertheless, Manick Lal Singha will be remembered for the discovery of the site and his contribution in this regard can never be undermined.

4.b. Previous Explorations

K.N. Dixit surveyed the site in 1974-75 and identified the potentiality of the site. Following these surveys, in 1975-76, P.C. Dasgupta of the Directorate of Archaeology, Government of West Bengal, assisted by Dilip. K. Chakrabarti and S.C. Mukherjee identified the mounds at Dihar and Saragdihi (chalcolithic sites of district Bankura) yielding materials from the palaeolithic times to the medieval period. The mounds at Dihar and Saragdihi yielded characteristic chalcolithic pottery such as red ware, black and red ware, black slipped wares and also northern black polished wares.
Some of the sherds in black and red ware had paintings on them too. Besides these, microliths, beads of semi precious stones were also picked up. In the following year (1976-77), S.C. Mukherjee revisited the site and collected vessels in black and red ware, black burnished ware and confirmed the chalcolithic character of the site that he found to be similar with Baneswar Danga (Bardhman) and Pandu Rajar Dhibi (Bardhaman) (IAR References cited). The site was subsequently surveyed by Amita Roy, S. Mukherjee and A.K Datta and these scholars much like others confirmed the chalcolithic status of the site. The site was explored by A.C. Pal between 1982-85 and was subsequently selected for the excavation. Few other chalcolithic sites were also located by Pal and his team at Chiada, Deuldanga, Tulsipur, Saragdihi, Kumardanga in this region (District Bankura, IAR References cited). The materials collected during these surveys were mostly stored at BAJCPB and in the reserved collection of the State Directorate of Archaeology, Government of West Bengal.

The artefacts collected during these surveys were not related to any context which causes difficulty in assigning proper chronology to them. The methodology adopted in these surveys is unknown but it seems that it is not free from biases. In case of pottery, black and red ware sherds were selectively collected. The associated potteries were neglected due to which, while going through the reserved collection, one cannot have a complete idea of the ceramic assemblage. The problem is same with other artefacts. Moreover, the actual reference of the locations within individual sites is also lacking.

Nevertheless, these surveys provide the groundwork for future explorations at the site as well as in the adjacent villages. For this, efforts of the above mentioned scholars are undeniable.

4. c. Excavations:


Following the earlier explorations at the site, Dihar was subject to excavation for the first time from 1982-1985 and 1990-1995 by the Department of Archaeology, University of Calcutta under the supervision of A.C. Pal (Pal 1992). The main objective of conducting excavation was to retrieve a complete cultural sequence of the site and this led to repeated excavations of the site for almost three years.
The mound measuring 99.668 sq m and rising some 7.5 m from the river bed of the Dwarakeswar revealed occupational strata of 2.5 m thick (Pl. I A, see map 6). The maximum deposit of the occupational strata comprised two broad distinct cultural periods, viz. chalcolithic period (period I) and early historical period (period II) without any break. The total cultural deposit consisted of seven distinct layers. Layers 1 to 3 belonged to the period II. Layer 4 was considered to be transitional and the rest of the layers (5, 6, and 7) were considered to be chalcolithic.

The chalcolithic assemblage of the site (Period I) include structural remains, assemblages of ceramics, lithics, bone tools, fragments of copper and other objects. The later cultural stage (Period II), which was identified as early historical witnessed the introduction of iron and cast copper coins. It is characterized by the occurrence of the ceramics of early historical times and other associated antiquities. According to the excavator, the ceramics comprise Sunga and Kushan bowls, storage jars, shallow dishes etc. in plain and painted forms. The other important findings of this period include a large number of beads of semiprecious stone, terracotta objects etc. No evidence of NBP (Northern Black Polished ware) was found in this period.

Due to limited excavation, the complete house plans could not be understood. But it was revealed that the houses were simple and the occurrence of post holes was found in layer no. 5. The excavator observed that the floors exposed during the course of excavation were made of beaten earth with rammed terracotta nodules and lime.

According to the excavator (Pal 1992), the ceramic industry includes black and red ware, cream slipped ware, incised ware and others. A few painted black and red ware sherds with simple curvilinear designs were also found. These specimens carry white painting mostly on the black surface of the vessels. The decorations consist of short oblique strokes, dots, dashes and parallel horizontal lines. The excavator observed that the typical black and red ware consists of carinated bowls with splayed out and flaring rim and convex sided bowls with a sagger base. Apart from this, the dominant varieties noted by the excavator are channel spouted vessels and bowls with slightly everted rims.

Miscellaneous artefacts: Microliths were found in a limited number in the occupational levels. The specimens of microliths were blades, scrapers, thumb nail
scrapers, lunates and a few micro-cores of fluted core variety. The raw material used for manufacture of microliths was quartzite, which was obtained from the bed of Dwarakeswar. A few fragmentary bone objects were found in the cultural deposits of the site. The tool types comprise picks, chisels with broad and narrow end, scrapers, needles and drills as noted by the excavator. A few fragmentary copper objects were found along with a large number of bone tools. Several cast copper coins depicting tree-in railing, *nandipada* and elephant symbols have been found in layer 3. These have the same characteristics as those found in other excavated early historic sites of West Bengal, e.g. Mangalkot and Chandraketugarh. A few specimens of terracotta game objects and animal figurines are attributed to the early historical period as suggested by the excavator. Beads of different types and sizes, some being discs and some others being elongated, have been found from layers 2, 3 and 4. Most of the beads were made of semiprecious stones like agate, feldspar, jadeite (green) and hematite.

According to the excavator, the Damodar-Dwarakeswar River valley was dominated by the chalcolithic culture and the people belonging to this culture settled in different parts of the valley. He further observed that the painted and the unpainted black and red ware, form two different cultural traditions and at Dihar, he observed a late chalcolithic phase where the two traditions are found to be coexisting and hence indistinguishable. On the basis of evidence and radiocarbon dates he has assigned the chalcolithic phase of the site to about 1000 B.C. He has stressed further that due to ecological factors, the neolithic culture might have been supplanted by the chalcolithic culture which was marked by the use of both painted and unpainted varieties of black and red ware, copper objects, microliths, beads and prolific amount of bone tools. According to the excavator, since the people were essentially agriculturalists, the introduction of iron at the site might have helped them with their agricultural activities and hence iron objects are evidenced in the early historical levels. But the same cultural assemblage characterized mostly by the black and red ware pottery was found to be continuing in the later stages but with some modifications. According to the excavator, the material evidence from the site is in conformity with the other eastern Indian chalcolithic sites at Chirand, Sonpur, Mahisdal, Tulsipur and others.
4.2. Dihar excavations (2009)

The excavation conducted by the earlier excavator informed us about the chalcolithic and early historical phase of the site. This excavation did not highlight the medieval phase at the site. The recent excavation conducted by the Department of Archaeology, University of Calcutta under the supervision of R. K. Chattopadhyay confirmed the occupation of the site in the medieval phase (Chattopadhyay et al. 2010).

Four mound areas within the site were selected for this excavation. These are Hirapur, Mabhabanitala, Manasatala and Kalbhairabtala. The main objectives of excavation were to know the comprehensive stratigraphy of the site as a supplementary reference to the earlier excavation reports, to elucidate the actual nature of the core and the peripheral areas and to assess the role of metal in the reconstruction of socio-economic characteristics of the region. The findings from the four mounds are as follows:

*Mabhabanitala* (DHR 1)

The area standing on the south western part of the village and measuring 300 sq m was chosen for the excavation program. The digging was restricted to 1.20 m but the virgin soil could not be reached. Layers 1, 2, and 3 showed deposition of artifacts in the form of black and red ware, iron slag, debris of metal working. These layers have been assigned to the medieval phase or more precisely ‘Malla phase’ by the excavator. The layer 5 has been assigned to the ‘pre-Malla’ phase by the excavator. The rest of the layers are disturbed and hence could not be assigned to any particular period (Chattopadhyay et al. 2010).

*Hirapur* (DHR 2)

This spot stands on the eastern part of the village along the main road. On the basis of the findings, the excavator has divided the entire occupation of this spot in three phases. Phase I has been related to early village farming associated with black and red ware ceramics without metal. Phase II has been related to early village farming cultures associated with black and red ware and metal. This phase has revealed storage and refuges pits. Two working floors were identified with rammed earth, potsherds, chipped stones, beads, fragments of polished stone tools, bottle glass tools,
faunal remains and worked bones. Besides these, worked bones, cut bones and milling tools were also collected. Phase III has been related to the historical phase showing continuity of black and red ware (Chattopadhyay et al. 2010). It has to be mentioned that, unlike the earlier excavation results, the recent excavation has yielded iron in association with BRW ceramics.

**Manasatala (DHR 3)**

This mound stands on the south eastern part of the village. The excavator has divided the entire sequence of Manasatala into two phases. Phase I has been associated with mature black and red ware phase with metal. Phase II has been related to the early historical period showing continuity of black and red ware. This mound has yielded black and red ware, black slipped ware and rouletted ware, metal slag, crucibles, raw materials, pigments etc (Chattaopdhyay et al 2010).

**Kalbhairabtala**

This mound area lies on the western part of the village. A test pit was taken in this part. The materials unearthed were highly disturbed and the digging was continued till a depth of 164 cm. Black and red ware, black slipped ware, grey ware, red ware and chocolate ware sherds were found from this place but since the context is disturbed due to the same location of the former excavation, the finds could not be placed into definite chronological order by the excavator.

On the basis of the available data, the excavator has suggested Hirapur (DHR 2) to encompass living and non living areas. According to the excavator it was primarily a habitation area. Manasatala (DHR 3) on the other hand has shown substantial evidences of iron smelting. Bhabanitala (DHR 1) was in all probability a religious compound within Dihar. Some floor levels were noticed at the Hirapur mound and a few fragmentary laterite blocks were evidenced during the course of excavation at the Mabhabanitala mound. Besides these, no other structural remains were noted at the site (Chattopadhyay et al. 2010).

**Pottery:** Ceramic assemblage has been separately discussed in the following pages.

**Miscellaneous finds:** Bone objects mostly in the form of decorative and utilitarian pieces were unearthed from the site. Antler specimens were found chiefly from the
Hirapur mound area. Besides these, cut bone and worked bone pieces were also found from the site. Beads recovered are mostly of carnelian (spherical), agate (etched with barrel shape, hexagonal), jasper (pentagonal, collared, spherical, short barrel shaped), and milky quartz (Spherical and disc shaped). The copper objects mostly comprise rings, bangles, beads, copper pieces, copper nodules, arrowheads and antimony rods. Iron objects mostly comprise nails, pegs, lumps, nodules of iron and few unidentified iron objects. According to the excavator, the metallic evidence from the site shows the utilization of chalcopyrite and malachite variety of copper ore, hematite and lateritic ores of iron. Metal artefacts/ objects and varying contexts of their appearance at Dihar have remained one of the most intriguing issues of the BRW bearing Early Village Farming phase of the region. The terracotta objects unearthed from the site are mostly hand modeled, cylindrical in shape with pin-hole decorations. Sometimes they are applied with red slip. Terracotta balls, net sinkers, hopscotches, spindle whorls, beads, skin rubbers, pottery discs, ear studs, terracotta lamps, wheels and game objects were also found during the excavation (Chattopadhyay et al. 2010).

4.c.3. Discussion

The excavations conducted by A.C. Pal and R.K. Chattopadhyay helped in ascertaining the continuous occupation of the site in the chalcolithic, early historical and medieval periods. The Kanc-Nadi passing through the western periphery of the village must have helped these people in the regular supply of water and hence, few scattered habitational mounds have been noticed along the Kana-Nadi. Though the data unearthed from the Kalbhairabtala mound could not be placed into proper chronological order, but the nature of the finds show that a chalcolithic and early historical level was prevalent here. In all probability, during the subsequent stages, the habitation spread in the southern part of the village in the Mabhabanitala and Manasatala mound areas, where medieval phase have been identified. However these conjectures necessitate further probing and appropriate data.

The excavation conducted by Pal did not provide any analytical overview of the site; moreover he only mentioned about the early phases of the site. The recent excavation helped in ascertaining the later phases of occupation at the site; however the selection of the areas for excavation probably needs reconsideration. Mabhabanitala is situated
geographically in the peripheral area of the site and on the slope which gradually leads to the modern flood plains of the river. This area is supposed to yield the washed down and deposited materials from the interior parts of the village. Moreover the presence of a huge banyan tree adjacent to the mound area has led to some amount of disturbance due to its roots and rootlets and has largely damaged the artefacts. The selection of the trenched mound at Kalbhairatala similarly leads to some uncertainty because in this area a trench was laid during the former excavation of the site. Though Pal has provided us with absolute dates (1000 B.C.) for the chalcolithic /BRW phase, they are equally desirable for the later phases of the site in order to analyse the cultural assemblage. In the recent excavation report, some dates have been given of which one of the dates for the early historical period has been given as 110 BC ± 141 yrs. Dates are equally necessary for the medieval phase evidenced at the site. Moreover, the analysis of faunal data (reports awaited) will help to a large extent in determining the nature of landscape and the activities of the people.

Modern anthropogenic activities have led to limited space for excavation. So widening of trenches becomes virtually impossible. This hinders the understanding of the site with details. The archaeological materials from the site are also fast disappearing. The site in its present state needs good amount of preservation. Only the Manasatala mound is relatively undisturbed and can be taken up for further excavations.

The medieval phase of the site as exposed through the recent excavation (2009) has revealed many artefacts and profuse potteries that have helped the researcher to understand the material remains of the explored site in the later cultural periods. The medieval phase of the site cannot be properly conceptualised if the medieval temples of Sareswar and Saileswar are not discussed here. Though it is difficult to ascertain whether the medieval remains unearthed at the site are coeval with the existing temples, but it is due to these temples that the site gained sanctity as well as a new character in the medieval period.
4.d. The Sareswar and Saileswar temples at Dihar

These twin temples stand on the north western periphery of Dihar (Pl. I B). The temples are visible from a distance. Scholars have been researching on these temples from time to time. These temples find mention in the writings of R.D. Banerjee who has ascribed its construction period to the third phase of the temple building activity (eleventh century AD). These temples find mention in the novel Durgesh Nandini, written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Though the temples are chiefly dedicated to lord Siva, we find the occurrence of votive horses and elephants in terracotta near the temples, which are offered when the wishes of people are fulfilled.

These temples are made of laterite (makra) stone. A monolithic bull, hewn out of the live rock, is seen facing the Saileswar temple. The twin temples resemble each other in plan and elevation and both have a pancheratha ground plan and a panchanga division of the bada. In both, a low plinth serves as the adisthana, while a frieze of caryatides demarcates the cubic lateral bada from the sikhara which rises in a number of stone courses, projected and recessed alternatively and ends in a flat roof (Das 1968).

R.D Banerjee (Banerjee 1933) observes them as being cruciform in plan; the lower parts of both of them are ornamental with the exception of a miniature sikhara over each of the openings in the central façade. He considers that the sikhara in both the temples have disappeared. The lower parts of each of these temples appear to have been plastered and white-washed. Over the plinth mouldings there is plain ashlar masonry up to the height of the lintels of the doorways. Above this portion begin the numerous cornices supported by elegant dwarfs. In the Sareswar temple, Banerjee found the different cornice mouldings to be extant. The carvings of the Saileswar temple were remarked to be inferior to the former. He assigns these temples to the beginning of eleventh century AD, the third period of the activity of the Eastern school.

D R. Das (Das 1968) considers them to be flat roofed from the beginning. According to him, the method of construction adopted in raising the tower did not allow the architect to make it curvilinear. Entering through the corbelled vestibule and descending down the steps to the floor of the sanctum, a frame of square architrave is placed where the wall section ends. Over this rise in gradually diminishing stages
several such frames. Ultimately, when the intervening space is considerably reduced, the chamber is sealed by stone blocks. As a result, the tower is restricted to a modest height, its outer contour being made vertical and top flat by stone work. Flat roofed Nagara temples appear to be rare and in this respect he considers the Sailesvara and Sareswara temples at Dihar to be unique. The miniature replicas of the shrine on its three sides suggest that the plan was predetermined.

The names of the two temples and the rock cut bull in front of the Sailesvara shrine suggests a Saivite affiliation. People of the locality keep terracotta horses and elephants, dedicated to dharma, inside the sanctum. These offerings are made when the desire of a devotee expressed to Dharma is fulfilled (Das 1968).

II

4.e. Explored and Excavated pottery from Dihar.

Since the present work focuses on the understanding of the sites on the basis of the ceramic assemblage, a detailed account of the explored and the excavated pottery samples have been provided below.

The explored pottery from Dihar was studied from two sources. Firstly some specimens were collected by the researcher while exploring the site. Potsherds were collected from the site mostly in the form of surface scatters. No exposed sections could be located within the site. In some areas within the site, especially near the mounds lying adjacent to the Kana-Nadi, black and red ware sherds were evidenced in huge numbers (Pl. I A). From rest of the mound areas also, scatters of potsherds were located and were randomly collected in order to make a representative collection of pottery samples. The site was extensively surveyed while selecting and collecting the sherds. The second studied collection of explored pottery samples relate to the reserved collection of the State Directorate of Archaeology. The collection was organized during the explorations conducted at the site by P.C. Dasgupta in 1975-76. He was assisted by Dilip. K. Chakraborty and S.C. Mukherjee.

The methodology adopted in the collection of pottery (State Directorate-Reserved Collection) is unknown but it seems that it is not free from biases since the whole
The excavated pottery assemblage from Dihar (2009 excavated collection) was studied in order to understand the stratigraphic context of the potsherds which has enabled the researcher to arrange the explored artefacts in proper chronological order. This study of a representative part of the excavated potteries would have been impossible without the generous help and support of the excavator (R.K. Chattopadhyay).

4.e.1. Methodology

The methodology adopted for the study was developed in accordance with what was represented in each collection. The specimens collected by the researcher were characterized by the presence of both rim sherds and body sherds. The State Directorate collection had majority of rim sherds. The excavated pottery assemblage revealed both rim sherds and body sherds; body sherds being greater than the rim sherds. The pottery samples have been studied typologically with more emphasis on the different types of wares and also keeping in account the formal and functional attributes of the different wares. Since the explored samples were found by the researcher mostly in the form of surface scatters, the excavated samples helped to a large extent in placing them in proper order. Not only the explored samples from Dihar, but the samples from the other explored sites of the river valley were also related to these excavated samples.

The pottery samples on the basis of the present study could be placed into three chronological phases- ‘chalcolithic’/BRW phase characterized by black and red ware pottery, early historical phase and medieval phase. After the early historical phase,
categorization into early medieval and medieval could not be done since the present evidence did not permit the researcher to do so. Firstly, no standardized pottery index was available for the study and secondly, the absence of absolute dates did not permit even the excavated pottery samples to be placed into ‘early medieval’ and ‘medieval’ categories. The entire collection of pottery after the early historical phase had to be placed in the medieval category.

**4.e.2. Explored Pottery**

In the explored assemblage of pottery, black and red ware forms the major variety. These mostly belong to the ‘chalcolithic’ period as revealed from the nature of the slip, fabric and shape. The fabric is medium to coarse, core is well oxidized and pre-fired slip has been applied on both the surfaces of the ware. The fabric varies from medium to coarse. The prominent shapes are those of bowls and vases. The colour of the slip varies from chocolate to red to orange. In some cases, the sherds have a lustrous appearance which might be due to burnishing. But some of the vessels also have an abraded surface. Most of the specimens are handmade. In such cases, the external surface appears buff in colour and the internal surface greyish. Vases are carinated, have flaring rims and a rounded body. The rims of these vases are usually rounded or bevelled. Bowls are either carinated or convex sided. The carinated bowls have flaring, rounded rims and the convex sided bowls have usually horizontally splayed out rims. In some cases, these have incurved featureless rims also.

Red Slipped ware forms the second most important ware in the collection. These belong to the medieval period and are similar to the excavated pottery samples of Dihar. Similar specimens have been noted at the site from the depth of 20-85 cm. The nature of the slip is post fired and is very oily which easily flakes off from the surface. The core is well oxidized and seems to be relatively fresh. In some specimens, black patches have been noticed that indicates the use of organic matters in the manufacture. Sand has been used in good proportion. The prominent shapes are of vases, handis and jars. Handis are generally carinated and have flaring sides and featureless rims. The vases have mostly flanged rims, concave necks and a flaring body. The jars have a globular body with beaded or horizontally splayed out rims. Some basins have also been noted with horizontally splayed out, drooping rims.
Grey ware forms the next important variety. Some specimens having fine slip and medium fabric are early historical. The ones with a sandy texture and coarser appearance belong to the medieval period (18-45 cm at Dihar). The medieval vessels are sturdier than the earlier ones. The core is sandy and both the surfaces have a micaceous appearance. Basins and sturdy vessels are the common shapes noticed in this ware.

Others: Chocolate ware and some ill fired fragmentary sherds were also collected from the site. The chocolate ware specimens belong to the chalcolithic period. Carinated vases and bowls are the common shapes noted in the case of chocolate ware. The nature of the slip is pre-fired and the fabric is similar to black and red ware specimens. The fragmentary ill fired sherds could not be placed in any category. Few black ware and red ware sherds were also collected during exploration. The black ware specimens have an original pale black surface over which black thick slip has been applied and this easily chips off from the surface. These are medieval and sturdy vessels are the only form noted in this ware. The red ware specimens are fragmentary and as a result proper shapes could not be denoted; these sherds could not be placed into any chronology.

4.d.3. Reserved Collection

In the reserved collection of the State Directorate also, black and red ware forms the major variety. The characteristics of these black and red ware sherds are similar to those of the explored potteries by the researcher. The red slipped ware, red ware and black slipped ware are the other varieties noted in this collection. The red ware varieties belong to the ‘chalcolithic’ phase. Similar specimens have been noted in the excavated pottery collection of the site (98-125cm). These specimens have red pre-fired slip applied on both the surfaces. The external surface has a lustrous appearance which might be due to burnishing. The fabric varies from coarse to medium and the prominent shapes are of carinated vases and bowls. Sand and organic matters have been used to a large extent in this ware. Most of these specimens are handmade.

Some red ware bowls have a wash applied on their external surface that has taken a pinkish appearance in most of the cases. This red ware mostly comprises convex-sided bowls with inturned or featureless rims.
Black slipped ware forms another variety in the collection. This variety can be placed in the early historical category comprising bowls with inturned rim and a rounded body. The section is thin and the surface appears to be very glossy which is probably due to burnishing. Fine striation marks have been noted on the internal surface of the sherds. Similar forms have been noted at Kalbhairabtala area (excavated samples) of Dihar.

In some of the fragmentary body sherds, paintings have been noted in black on the red surface, in chocolate on the red surface and in white on the red surface of black and red ware sherds. The designs are mostly in the form of strokes, zigzag lines, dots and dashes. Some incipient forms of decorations have been noted in the form of grooves, incised lines and corrugations, mostly on the exterior surface of the sherds.

**Excavated pottery of Dihar (2009 Excavations)**

**4.e.4. Pottery of Mabhabanitala, Dihar**

*Mabhabanitala* stands on the south western part of the site Dihar. Four trenches were taken up for study, XA 1, XA 2, XA 3, and ZA 1. Deep digging was restricted in ZA 1 only. Pottery samples of only two trenches XA1 and ZA1 were available for the study. The excavator in this mound area has identified a *Malla* (medieval) and a pre-*Malla* phase (early medieval). The description of the pottery has been given according to these divisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pottery of Trench XA2, Mabhabanitala</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medieval (Malla)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSW</td>
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<td>CRW</td>
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<tr>
<td>BW</td>
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<tr>
<td>E. Medieval (Pre-Malla)</td>
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<td>RW</td>
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Table: 2, RSW-Red Slipped ware, CRW- Coarse red ware, BW- Black ware, RW-Red ware.
The stratigraphy is quite disturbed and since the mound lies in the slope area, much of the remains are washed out and deposited materials from the higher areas of the village. Two broad divisions have been done by the excavator as mentioned earlier (16cm-68cm — *Malla*: Medieval, 68cm-100cm — *Pre-Malla*: Early Medieval). Red Slipped ware, coarse red ware and black ware are the three wares noted in the medieval period.

Medieval: Red slipped ware sherds recovered from the excavation has a bright red slip applied on the internal surface of the sherds, the slip is oily and bright red in colour. It is post-fired slip and easily flakes off from the surface. The core seems to be well oxidized but occasional black patches have been noted in the sections, that indicates the use of organic matters during manufacture. The section is medium and the fabric varies from medium to fine. The prominent shapes noted in this ware are vases and heavy duty vessels. These vases mostly have flanged or outturned rims. The jars have mostly triangular corrugated rims, beaded rims and horizontally splayed out rims respectively. Some cups have been noted in this ware. These specimens are all wheel-made.

Coarse red ware is another type noted which belongs to the same time period i.e. medieval. Vessels belonging to this ware are devoid of any slip and have a wash applied on the external surface of the sherds. This wash does not come off easily. The fabric varies from coarse to medium. The shapes noted are bowls and jars. The bowls mostly have a globular body and flanged and corrugated rims; flaring and nail headed rims have been noted also in some cases. In some forms, there is a faint carination in the neck. The jars have thicker sections and are in many cases devoid of any slip. They have flaring rims. Incised decorations have been noted on the external surface of some of the vessels.

Black ware is the third ware noted in the assemblage. This too belongs to the medieval category. The ware has black slip applied on the external surface. It has a very irregular surface and the fabric is coarse. The core indicates good amount of sand in the making of these vessels. The paint is applied in the form of slip, only on the external surface, which easily chips off. The forms noted in this ware are bowls and vases. These have mostly rounded body and incurved rims. Some of these specimens
have punctured dots as designs on the external surface of the sherds. Vases in black ware have mostly outturned or splayed out rims. The fabric is similar to the bowls.

The excavator has identified a pre-Malla phase just before the medieval phase. The only ware noted in this phase is red ware. This ware has an ochrous slip applied on both the surfaces. Some of the specimens have medium to coarse fabric and has a rusticated surface at the base which indicates that the vessel might have been used for cooking or might have come in contact with fire.

Besides these, terracotta lamps in grey ware and red ware, pottery discs in red ware and porcelain sherds have also been recovered from the medieval levels of the trench XA2 at Mabhabanitala.

<table>
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<th>CRW</th>
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Table: 3

CRW-Coarse red ware, RSW-Red slipped ware, BW-Black ware, GW-Grey ware.

There are the four prominent wares noted in the ZA1 trench of Mabhabanitala. These four wares can be placed in the medieval category. The excavator could identify only the medieval phase in this trench. The lower layers are quite disturbed. The coarse red ware, red slipped ware and black ware have the same characteristics as those in the XA2 trench. Basins are an additional form noted in red slipped ware. The proportion
of coarse red ware is greater than red slipped ware in this trench. The rest of the features of all the wares are similar. Grey ware has a very sandy core, rough texture and the fabric is coarse. The external surface of the grey ware vessels is micaceous. There are groove lines noticed on the body of the vessels. Two types of bowls have been noted. The first one has everted rim and a rounded body and the second is a shallow bowl with a rounded body, incurved rim and with an external ledge. In the most common form, a vase is found to have splayed out sides and a flanged rim. Fragmentary lids and dishes are the other forms noted in this ware.

No decorations have been noted in the above mentioned wares. Some coarse red ware varieties have paddle and anvil impressions on them. Some ill fired fragmentary sherds have been noted in the trench. Terracotta lamps (red ware and grey ware), pottery discs and miniature pots (red ware) have been noted in this trench. Some hand-made specimens of lamps have also been recorded.

4.e.5. Excavated pottery of Hirapur mound, Dihar.

_Hirapur_ stands on the eastern part of the village along the main road. According to the excavator, Phase I (135 – 208 cm) has been related to early village farming cultures associated with black and red ware ceramics without metal. Phase II (84-135 cm) has been related to early village farming cultures associated with black and red ware and metal. Phase III (35-84 cm) has been related to the early historical phase showing continuity of black and red ware.
1. BRW phase without metal⁷ (pre-metallic phase): In this phase, three wares have been noted. Red ware and black and red ware were found more or less in equal proportions. In red ware, the external surface varies in colour from red, orange to chocolate and has been applied on both the surfaces. The slip is pre-fired in nature. In some cases, the surface is lustrous which is probably due to burnishing. The fabric is medium and the core is well oxidized indicating the use of organic matters revealed through the dark patches in the core. The prominent shapes noted are carinated vases with flaring rims and bowls with; rounded bodies and incurved rims, carinated bowls with splayed out rims, flat bowls etc. Some vases in red ware have beaded rims also. Most of the specimens are hand-made.

Black and red ware sherds are similar to the red ware specimens in fabric. The shapes are also more or less similar. But the additional form noted in black and red ware is the tumbler. Some tumblers have straight sides while others have some concave sides. The base portions of the tumblers have been recorded with a diameter of 16-18 cms. The shape of the rims could not be ascertained because a complete tumbler was not
available for the study. Most of the vessels in black and red ware are hand-made. The neck portion of some of the vessels shows signs of luting.

Coarse red ware sherds are similar to the specimens found from XA2 trench of Mabhabanitala mound (medieval phase). The slip in these coarse red ware specimens is actually in the form of a wash. The fabric varies from coarse to medium. The shapes noted are of bowls and jars. The bowls mostly have a globular body and flaring or horizontally splayed out rims. In some forms, there is a faint carination in the neck. The jars have thicker sections and are in many cases are devoid of any slip. Decorations are mostly confined to the red ware and black and red ware sherds. Some paintings in white and black pigments have been noted on the red and black surface of the sherds, which are in the form of geometrical strokes. Paddle impressions have been noted on the coarse red ware sherds.

2. BRW phase with metal: The specimens of red ware and coarse red ware are similar to the specimens noted in the earlier phase. But in the case of black and red ware, new forms like handis and convex-sided bowls have been noted in this phase. The proportion of red ware and black and red ware is found to be more or less equal much like the earlier phase.

3. Early Historical phase: Four wares have been noted in this phase. Black and red ware specimens are found to be continuing in this phase also. But the nature of the slip is slightly different. The slip is probably post-fired which easily chips off from the surface. Striation marks are visible on some of them indicating the use of wheel in the manufacturing process. The earlier shapes like vases, bowls and tumblers continue.

Grey ware: The grey ware specimens have a fine fabric since they seem to have been manufactured from very well levigated clay which is free from impurities, though sand and organic matters have been used in the manufacturing of the vessels. Some of the vessels show a micaceous surface. The vessels in grey ware from the early historical period have been applied with a thin wash which makes both the surfaces of the vessels extremely smooth. These vessels have revealed striation marks on the internal surface which indicates the use of wheel. Some of the bowls have flat bases
which show string marks that might have been used for lifting the vessels from the wheel.

Grey ware in this period mostly comprises bowls, vases and jars respectively. The jars mostly have an internal ledge. The clay seems to be very well levigated and the core is uniformly oxidized. Bowls have rounded profile with incurved rims. Vases mostly have outturned rounded rims. Internal corrugations have been noted on the internal surface of the vessels. The surface treatment is better than the ones found from the medieval phases at Mabhabanitala.

Black slipped ware: The black slipped ware specimens are confined to this phase only. They have the finest fabric of all the wares. The specimens have surely been manufactured through well levigated clay which is free from impurities. Uniform striation marks are clearly visible on the internal surface of the sherds indicating its manufacture on a fast wheel. These bowls mostly have flat bases. The only form noted in this ware is the convex-sided bowls with featureless rims. The sections of the bowls are thin and ranges between 0.3-0.5 cm. Black slipped ware specimens have also been found from the Manasatala and Klabhairabtala mound areas. But in the Manasatala area, it is found from the BRW phase in association with metal. From the Kalbhairabtala area also, there is evidence of this ware but the context is slightly disturbed. The specimens collected from the Kalbhairabtala area are the finest amongst all.

Black ware: The shapes are strictly confined to bowls and very few fragmentary jars. The fabric and surface treatment are somewhat similar to the black ware specimens found from the chalcolithic levels. But these specimens have thinner sections than the ones found from the chalcolithic levels. The vessels are applied with a thin wash but the fabric is not as fine as the black slipped ware specimens. Sand and organic matters have been used in considerable amount in the manufacturing process. The surface is not as glossy as the black slipped ware samples. Some of the vessels have luting marks near the neck indicating that the specimens were made in parts. The bowls mostly have outturned flanged rims or even everted rims. Some specimens have been noted with incurved flanged rims also. The basins in this ware mostly have beaded rims. The sections of the bowls and the basins vary between 0.5-0.9 cm. The jars have
a thicker section than the bowls (0.8-0.9 cm). In some specimens, the profile was difficult to determine due to the fragmentary nature of the sherds.

Besides these wares, from the upper levels in this area, some red slipped ware and red ware specimens were found which cannot be called early historical because, these bear resemblances with the ones found from the medieval phase at Mabhabanitala. Red slipped ware and red ware specimens are similar to those in the XA2 trench of Mabhabanitala mound. Red slipped ware specimens have post fired slip applied on the internal surface of the vessels which flakes off from the surface. The fabric is medium and the core indicates uniform firing. Vases are the prominent forms noted in this ware having flanged or outturned corrugated rims. Red ware specimens are similar to those found in the Pre-Malla phase of the XA2 trench. The only form noted in this ware is bowls. Some incised decorations have been noted in the red slipped ware sherds.

4.e.6. Excavated pottery of Manasatala, Dihar (DHR3)

This mound stands on the south eastern part of the village. This part of the village is relatively undisturbed and has a shrine of Manasa in the vicinity. The modern flood plains of the river Dwarakeswar lies adjacent to this spot. The excavator has divided the occupation of this area into two phases - Phase 1: Black and red ware with metal, Phase 2: Early historical phase showing continuity of black and red ware.
Table: 5, RW-Red ware, BRW- Black and red ware, BW-Black ware, GW- Grey ware, CW-Chocolate ware, BFW-Buff ware.

1. BRW phase with metal (67 - 109 cm): In this phase, four wares have been noted as mentioned above. The red ware and the black and red ware specimens are similar to those found at the Hirapur mound. But in this excavated mound, no tumblers in black and red ware were found. The other forms like carinated vases, convex sided bowls were recovered from this phase. The nature of the slip and fabric are also alike. The black slipped ware specimens have a thicker section than those found at Hirapur. This comprises mostly convex sided bowls. However, these vessels appear to be handmade like the rest of the areas.

Chocolate ware specimens in few numbers have been found in this area which is similar to the explored specimens of the researcher. The proportion of red ware is greater than the black and red ware. But the concentration of overall pottery in comparison to Hirapur is less. This might be due to the fact that the associated artefacts like iron slag, iron objects and crucibles have a greater concentration in the area. Unlike the Hirapur mound area, black slipped ware specimens from this area
have been found from the initial phase - ‘BRW phase with metal’. From the Hirapur area, black slipped ware specimens have been found from the early historical phase. However, the shapes, fabric and surface treatment are the same.

2. Early historical phase showing continuity of black and red ware (15 - 67 cm): From this phase, black and red ware, coarse red ware, buff ware, black ware and grey ware have been found. The nature of black and red ware sherds is similar to that of the earlier phase.

Red ware comprises of bowls, vases and jars mostly. The fabric of the specimens varies from medium to coarse. A light wash has been applied on both the surfaces of the vessels which in most of the cases have taken a pinkish appearance. In the earlier phase, the slip which was pre-fired varied between red, orange and pink. But in this period, it is chiefly restricted to shades of pink and is in the form of a wash. The core is uniformly fired and striation marks on most of the vessels are not visible, barring few. Some bowls have specially rusticated surfaces. Some again show luting marks near the neck. The sections of the bowls as well the vases are same and ranges between 0.6-0.8 cm. The jars, however, have a thicker section.

Vases are less common than bowls in red ware. The rims in the case of vases have mostly splayed out and flanged rims. The major forms in bowls are carinated bowls with everted or featureless rims, convex bowls with horizontally splayed out rims, convex bowls with intumed rims and convex bowls with beveled rims. The shapes are more or less similar to the ones found from the BRW phase, but the slip takes the form of a wash in this period.

In case of coarse red ware, sand has been used in greater proportion unlike the coarse red ware vessels from other mounds. The nature of black ware is also similar to the specimens from the Hirapur area. Grey ware sherds have a fine fabric but being very fragmentary their shapes could not be ascertained.

Buff ware specimens have been noticed in this mound. These specimens have an abraded appearance and the impression of rootlets have been noted on these specimens. The core in this ware is gritty and porous indicating the use of sand, minute stone particles and sand in the manufacturing process. The section of the bowls in this ware ranges between 0.5-0.7 cm, like the bowls noticed in rest of the
wares. This ware mostly comprises bowls with intumed, flanged and everted rims respectively. These bowls mostly have a convex profile and flat bases. Besides bowls in buff ware, no other forms have been noted in this ware.

From this phase, a singular sherd of rouletted ware has been recovered. The rouletted design is seen on the internal surface and the fabric of the specimen is very fine. But the specimen is so fragmentary that the actual shape could not be denoted. Decorations in the form of paddle impressions have been noted on the coarse red ware specimens. Grooves as well as corrugations have been noted in red ware and grey ware specimens (of the early historical phase).

4.e.7. Excavated pottery from Kalbhairabtala, Dihar

Table: 6, RSW-Red Slipped ware, CRW-Coarse red ware, GW-Grey ware, BSW-Black slipped ware, BRW-Black and red ware, CW-Chocolate ware, RW-Red ware.

A test pit was taken here. The materials unearthed were highly disturbed and the digging was continued till the depth of 164 cm. A modern temple stands in the vicinity. In the former excavations conducted by Pal, trenches were taken in this part of the village adjacent to Kana-Nadi. This test pit was taken to assess the nature of the site in relation to Kana-Nadi. Though the excavator has not suggested any tentative chronology for this part of the mound, but on the basis of typological
analysis of pottery, three broad chronological phases have been discerned by the researcher.

Red slipped ware, grey ware and coarse red ware varieties unearthed from excavation, can be placed in the medieval period. Red slipped ware vessels/sherds are applied with the characteristic oily slip on the internal surface of the vessels. These vessels mostly have bevelled rims, flanged rims and even splayed out rims. Some of the vessels have an internal ledge. The characteristics are similar to the red slipped ware vessels found from the medieval levels of the other mounds. Grey ware sherds have thicker sections and mostly comprise basins, dishes and fragmentary lids. The external surface of these vessels is micaceous and sand has been used in greater proportion in this ware than others. Coarse red ware jars and bowls have also been noted.

Black slipped ware sherds in this area have a very fine quality and have a very glossy surface. They have a very fine section and indicate the use of well levigated clay in the manufacture. The surface is highly burnished. Striation marks are very regular indicating its manufacture on a fast wheel. This ware only comprises of convex sided bowls. These convex bowls have mostly incurved rims. Black slipped ware specimens are found in greater proportion in this area in comparison to other three mound areas within the village. This ware has been placed in the early historical period.

Black and red ware and red ware sherds are more frequent than the other varieties in the chalcolithic levels and comprise of carinated vessels and bowls mostly. A singular specimen of black and red ware is seen with a ring base. The sections are thicker and sturdier in some of the sherds especially in the case of beakers. These specimens are also handmade. The core of these vessels indicates the use of organic matters and sand in good proportion. In some cases, the core is blackish due to improper firing. The colour of the external surface in the black and red ware sherds vary from red to orange to pink and sometimes chocolate also. Black and red ware is found to be continuing in this trench till the lowest levels.

Red ware specimens have also been noted in this level. These specimens have a pre-fired reddish slip applied on both the surfaces of the vessels. In some cases, where the slip has disappeared, the sherds appear to have a buffish surface. In the lowest levels
(121 cm) of the trench, bioturbation signs (impression of rootlets on the external surface of the sherds) have been noted. This might be due to local water stagnation. The other minor varieties noted are chocolate ware and some fragmentary ill fired sherds.

4.e.8. Observations:

The terminologies used by the excavator had to be revised to some extent in order to fit the data in proper chronological order and for the convenience of the researcher. The excavator has divided the entire chalcolithic phase or the BRW phase into two phases, according to its association with metallic assemblage (BRW without metal, BRW with metal). In this regard, it has to be mentioned that Datta (Datta 1995) followed the same principle while working on the BRW sites of West Bengal. According to him, iron was successfully and effectively used by the black and red ware people and this gradually merged into the historical period through a distinct transitional stage (Datta 1995). So, on the basis of evidences from the excavated chalcolithic sites like Mangalkot, Hatigra, Bahiri, Dihar and Pandurajardhibi, it has been claimed that instead of copper and lithic implements, these sites evidenced the use of iron implements from the chalcolithic levels. Under these circumstances the term ‘chalcolithic’ is equated to ‘black and red ware’ cultural phase. Copper implements in the form of decoration items have been traced from the above sites, whereas, iron objects are profuse and technically better than copper objects (Datta 1995). The present excavator has tried to see an association of this phase with Early Village Farming cultures and at the same time has mentioned that in the early historical phase, the continuance of BRW has been well-traced at the site (Chattopadhyay et al. 2010).

Black and red ware is found predominantly in the middle (early historical) and the lower levels (chalcolithic/BRW phase) in the four excavated mounds. But the proportion is highest at the Hirapur mound. This particular ware is found to be associated with metal and without metal in the three areas. The diagnostic forms noted in this ware are convex sided bowls, carinated vases, shallow bowls and tumblers. The tumblers form a typical feature of the site which is similar to the specimens from the chalcolithic site Baneswardanga in Bardhaman. Most of the black and red ware
specimens show the use of cow dung, husk, sand and mica. Vessels in BRW were both handmade and wheel made. The concentration of handmade ones was found to be more in the Kalbhairabtala area. The nature of the slip in the case of the black and red ware vessels collected from the early historical levels in the Hirapur mound area is somewhat different from those in the proper BRW phase. The slip easily comes off from the surface in case of the former. The slip of the vessels in the lower levels (chalcolithic/BRW phase) is of pre-fired nature and it does not come off easily from the body of the vessels. The surface of some of the black and red ware sherds is lustrous due to burnishing, but some have matt surfaces also.

The black slipped ware sherds are confined to the early historical phase and the ‘BRW with metal phase’. These have been found from the trenches at Hirapur, Manasatala and Kalbhairabtala. But the ones collected from Kalbhairabtala are of finer quality than others. This ware strictly comprises bowls. The striation marks in these sherds indicate the use of a fast wheel. In fact, of all the wares noted at the site, black slipped ware has the best quality.

The pre-Malla phase noticed at Mahabanitala has been equated with the ‘early medieval’ phase but there is uncertainty about the actual nature of the site during this period. This is largely due to the absence of substantial artefacts and absolute dates. This phase only revealed red ware vessels with an ochrous wash, on the basis of which, it is unfair to judge the sites of an area during the early medieval phase. These problems have led the researcher to consider these sherds (red ware with ochrous wash) within the medieval ceramic assemblage.

Red slipped ware specimens from the medieval phase have a bright red slip applied on both the surfaces. It seems that the slip is post-fired. The actual reason behind the application of the slip only on the internal surface is difficult to ascertain. The slip has been applied on the external surface of these sherds, from the neck portion. Vases are the most common form noted in medieval red slipped ware followed by the other forms. Red ware and coarse red ware specimens have also been noted in almost all the mounds with different treatment of the slip. The coarse red ware specimens have a wash applied on both the surfaces. In these specimens, sand has been used in greater proportion than others, probably, to make them more durable. Red ware specimens
have been recovered from the early medieval phase (‘pre-Malla’ as designated by the excavator) and also from the lower levels at the site. The specimens, noted from the lower levels (early historical phase) have a pinkish slip applied on them. The ones found from the chalcolithic levels have been applied with a pre-fired slip on both the surfaces. Bowls and vases both have been recovered in these wares.

The other wares noted at the site are grey ware, buff ware, chocolate ware and black ware in varying proportions. Grey ware specimens have been noted in few numbers which are confined to specific shapes like lids, dishes and bowls. Buff ware specimens are very few at the site which mostly comprises bowls and in most of the cases have an abraded surface. Black ware sherds have been found from the early historical as well as medieval levels. Chocolate ware has been found strictly in association with the black and red ware sherds and the common forms noted in this ware are carinated bowls and vases. Besides these, fragmentary parts of touyers and perforated wares have been collected from Manasatala. Very few cord-impressed and rusticated wares have been noted at Hirapur and Manasatala. In general, sand and organic matters have been used in good proportion for the manufacture of the wares. The red slip applied over the vessels might have been made from the red pigments or red ochre. In the course of excavation, lumps of red ochre have been recorded from the chalcolithic / BRW levels. For burnishing, probably tortoise shells were used. From the pottery samples it appears that fast wheel was used for manufacturing the vessels specially those coming from the early historical or medieval phases. Striation marks have been noted in most of the vessels. They are highly prominent in the black slipped ware vessels. The base portion of the vessels indicates the use of string for lifting the vessels from the wheel. But substantial number of hand-made specimens in BRW has been noted from the chalcolithic /BRW levels. The excavator suggests of them being produced in turn-tables (Chattopadhyay et al. 2010).

The artefacts unearthed from the Kalbhairabtala area had to be arranged for convenience into three chronological periods according to the potteries unearthed from the other three mounds. The excavator did not assign any chronology to the artefacts due to the disturbed nature of the mound.
An ethnographic survey was conducted with present day potters (Uliara and Janta villages) to gain insights into the manufacturing techniques of the vessels. These potters use sand from the bed of the river Dwarakeswar as a material and add it with clay. The easy availability of sand has led the potters to utilize it on a much larger scale. For the red slip applied on the vessels, the local lateritic soil is used and when mixed with water, it forms a fine paint which is applied on the vessels. The present day potters at Ulliara and Janta use red soil from Gosainpur (it has a local lateritic outcrop) lying on the right bank of the river for the making this red paint. A locally available yellowish kind of soil is also used by the potters for making slip. Many old techniques are still practiced by the potters. In order to manufacture types like handis and jars, the paddle and anvil are still used by the potters. In many cases, as found in the vessels from the excavated context, the modern vessels are also made in parts and are luted together. A detailed discussion on the ethnographic survey has been given in Chapter 6.

The nature of the ceramic assemblage recorded from the four areas helps to gain insights about the nature of the site. Though such an endeavour needs further probing, but a preliminary idea about the utilisation of space can be formed from the nature of artefactual evidences and through communication with the excavator. No analysis could be done because the present researcher could only study a representative part of the entire ceramic assemblage and moreover the entire excavation report is not yet published. Hence, no drawings could be added in this discussion. The Mabhabanitala area was most probably used as a religious place as indicated by the miniature pots and the numerous terracotta lamps which have been unearthed from the area. These lamps are mostly handmade and are in red ware. In some, they are applied with a red wash. Probably these formed a part of their dedicatory offerings. The Manasatala area shows that it was chiefly a metal working zone as indicated from the findings of huge amount of iron slag, crucibles, burnt floor patches and small containers which might have been used for some purpose related with metal working.

The Hirapur area was completely a habitation zone where mostly artifacts related to house hold work were unearthed. The amount of potsherds and vessels recovered from this mound is highest. Utilitarian forms like handis and jars have been noted in largest numbers. Black and red ware specimens in this mound area are found to
follow in the early historical phase also. The diagnostic froms in black and red ware continue throughout. The context of Kalbhairabtala is much disturbed and it is difficult to ascertain the actual nature of this area. The medieval potteries are comparatively less in this part of the site. Absolute dates in this case will surely help in ascertaining the nature of occupation at the site. In the course of excavation, tortoise shells, antlers, and other bone objects have been recovered o a large extent. Hopefully analysis of the faunal data will provide additional inputs.

4.f. Comparative Study of Pottery: Explored and Excavated

A brief discussion on the comparative study of the explored and the excavated pottery assemblage has been provided here.

Black and red ware specimens form the major variety in both the assemblages. Hirapur mound has yielded the highest amount of black and red ware sherds. Black and red ware continues till the early historical period in this mound area. It is very difficult indeed to distinguish between chalcolithic and early historic black and red ware. The only difference noted is in the nature of slip. The slip in most of the specimens in the later period becomes post fired which easily flakes off from the surface. No tumblers in BRW were noted in the explored assemblage from the site, but from the excavated assemblage, many specimens of tumblers in black and red ware were recovered.

Red slipped ware, coarse red ware and red ware sherds are three varieties in red ware which were encountered during excavation. But in the explored assemblage, no coarse red ware specimens were found. But it is true, that it forms a substantial part of the excavated pottery assemblage of the medieval period. However, red slipped ware sherds of both medieval period and red ware of chalcolithic/BRW phase have been recorded in the explored assemblage.

Black slipped ware sherds in stratigraphic context have been recovered from Hirapur and Kalbhairabtala area. But the specimens of Kalbhairabtala are of finer quality than the others. The explored black slipped ware sherds are also very fine, have thin sections and seems to be similar to the Kalbhairabtala specimens. The specimens recovered from the Hirapur mound area have thicker sections. The explored black
slipped ware specimens have also been placed in the same time period as those recovered from the excavation.

The other explored wares like chocolate ware, black ware, and grey ware are more or less similar to the excavated specimens. Since the chocolate ware is strictly associated with black and red ware, the shapes and fabric are also similar to the black and red ware forms. The explored potteries in chocolate ware also follow the same pattern. The explored assemblage has yielded grey ware sherds of the medieval period mostly. Early historical grey ware has been noted but in less amount. Black ware specimens are very few in the explored assemblage but they are similar to the excavated sherds.

4.g. Conclusion

The multicultural site Dihar as discussed above has been considered to be a significant marker in the present study. The site has revealed BRW/chalcolithic, early historical and medieval phases and the recovery of respective artefacts from these phases have helped in understanding the nature of the site to a large extent. However, the present data does not permit us to understand clearly whether the site transgressed through the early medieval phase and then subsequently reached the medieval phase. This particular aspect necessitates more research since early medieval and medieval sites in Bengal are not properly understood and have not received appreciable consideration from scholars; hence, the site needs to be studied with more precision.

The diagnostic Sunga terracotta plaques of early historical period have been found in very few numbers from the early historical period. However, other early historical artefacts bear resemblances with those found from rest of the sites like Mangalkot, Pokhanna or Kotasur. The coins and beads of semi-precious stones indicate similarities in the early historical material assemblage. Though the site continued its habitation till the medieval and probably also maintained good communication with the upland and the coastal areas, but it is really difficult to give an urban status to the site at present. Though black slipped ware specimens were found, no evidence of NBP ware has been found from the site. In fact, it seems that the site being situated in the juncture zone of lateritic and alluvial uplands maintained its own character and though having similarities in the artefactual evidences with the sites like Mangalkot, Pokhanna, Bharatapur, Kotasur and Baneswardanga, Dihar had some unique features.
of its own, where the evolved form of metal technology must have played a dominant role in the survival strategy. The excavator also stresses on this factor (Chattopadhayay et al. 2010). Since the site revealed a continuous occupation throughout the three chronological periods, it needs more detailed understanding and thorough investigation through the artefactual data. It should also to be mentioned here, that the researcher has presented the excavated data in the way as understood from the personal communication with the excavator and according to the initial published reports on the excavation of the site. The materials of the former excavation were not available for study. A representative part of the pottery samples (excavated pottery, 2009) were studied by the researcher.

Nevertheless, this data has immensely helped the researcher to know about the site and the area as a whole. On this basis, the explored artefacts could be placed into chronological order. Personal communication with the villagers has enabled the researcher to note the way of life of the present villagers. The local people offer regular pujas to lord Siva in the temples and the ‘Gajan’ festival (annual festival at chaitra sankranti) is celebrated with grandeur in the village. Thousands of people visit the site during this time to celebrate this occasion. Rituals are followed during the festival for three to four days. According to the local priest, the same rituals and customs of ‘Gajan’ are being followed since ages and the worship is done by the same family of the priest through generations. Some amount of intermingling of different customs and rituals are noted. It is also known from the medieval records that the Malla Rajas were specially attached with the Gajan festival of this place (Sanyal 1987). Besides these, Charak, Dharmaraj puja, Baruni puja, Sravan mela and Poush sankranti are celebrated by the people in the village. Local deities like Manasa and Sitala are also worshipped by the local population. All these observations have helped to gain insights into the daily lives of the people and in a way the present status of the site. From the local memories, the chronicles of the rulers of the Malla dynasty of Bishnupur/ Vishnupur and their revenue records, it is apparent, that Dihar was essentially a place of Saiva religious activities during the medieval period.

The site has immense archaeological potential and it is quite improbable that the site survived alone in the past. There must have been good communication with the adjacent sites in the vicinity, as understood from the explored data that has been
presented in Chapter 3. In the following chapter, the nature and context of the
explored sites has been discussed after which the investigator has focused on the
artefactual evidences (Chapter 6) from the rest of the explored sites in the river valley.
The discussion on the excavated pottery of Dihar has been repeated in Chapter 6
where, the explored ceramic assemblage has been elaborately discussed.
Notes

1. The site was explored from time to time, but was first identified by K.N. Dixit and was subsequently explored extensively for the first time by a local enthusiast, Manik Lal Singha. The later explorations were generally part of bigger exploration programmes undertaken by different institutions and Universities. Together with Dihar, other sites within district Bankura were subsequently explored. From these reports, mostly published in Reviews, we can have a fair idea about the artefacts collected from the sites. However, it has to be mentioned that all these findings are without any contextual references. Moreover precise locations have not been mentioned in any of these reports (IAR References cited).

2. Some copper artefacts and copper coins of Dihar were studied by Pranab K. Chattopadhyay. According to him the metal smiths of Dihar were conversant with forging of copper, wire drawing and annealing from the chalcolithic period. Subsequently, they also learnt the technique of alloying and bronze making. From the studies, it has also been proved that they knew adding tin and lead to copper to reduce the melting point and better fusibility required in case of manufacturing of copper coins in early historical period (Chattopadhyay 2000).

3. Pre-Malla, Malla phase as used by the excavator implies literally the early medieval and medieval stages. According to the excavator (R. K. Chattopadhyay), the early medieval stage is very difficult to evaluate on the basis of the meagre evidences of artefacts found from the site. The absolute dates and the collection of artefacts from some other excavated sites in the vicinity will only help in evaluating the phase properly. In the present study, the terminologies have been used to depict the early medieval (pre-Malla) and the medieval (Malla) phases but generalizing the characteristics of these periods only on the basis of evidences from the site Dihar, will not be without flaws.

4. Absolute dates for the recent excavation (2009, conducted by R. K. Chattopadhyay) have already arrived from Birbal Sahani Institute and have been published in the article on Dihar (Chattopadhyay et al. 2010).

5. Faunal data from the site has been sent to Deccan College, Pune for quantitative and qualitative analysis but the reports are awaited.

6. Black and red ware potteries from the site in the chalcolithic levels have been found both with paintings and without paintings. Pal, from the potteries of the earlier excavations, tried to establish two different cultural traditions based on the specific pottery styles (Pal 1992). But how far this can be substantiated with relevant evidences is a matter of further investigation.

7. The excavator has used the term ‘black and red ware phase’ instead of ‘chalcolithic’ since very limited amount of copper (in the form of ornaments) as well as lithic tools has been found from the site. He has preferred to use the term ‘black and red ware with metal’ and ‘black and red ware without metal’ to denote the early and late phases of black and red ware associated with iron.
or copper, which is equivalent to the chalcolithic phase. Iron artefacts found from the site are worth mentioning. For the later phases of the site, he uses the term ‘early historical’ which also shows the continuity of black and red ware potteries.