PREFACE

The present thesis aims to investigate the archaeological record of the middle reaches of the Dwarakeswar river valley, district Bankura, West Bengal. The main emphasis has been given to understand the emergence of archaeological sites in relation to the landscape of the area. In this regard, the investigator has concentrated on the Black and red ware sites, Early Historic and Medieval sites of the river valley. Prehistoric investigations have not been included in the present study. A regional survey methodology has been adopted in order to locate and study the sites in the river valley. In order to have a holistic understanding of the sites, emphasis has been given on the nature and the context of the finds. The location and distribution of the sites in the river valley has enabled the researcher to construct a picture of the past settlement patterning. Ceramics have been considered to be the most significant marker for assigning the sites to specific chronologies.

The study area covers the entire stretch of the Dwarakeswar river valley from the zone of confluence of Dwarakeswar with Gandheswari till the point where it enters district Hugli. This entire area falls within district Barkura between 100 m and 40 m above MSL. This entire stretch has been divided into few zones according to the micro-regional variations in landscape. Dihar, a multicultural site ranging in occupation from chalcolithic to medieval, is the only excavated site of the entire river valley. The site has been subject to excavation twice and has revealed substantial evidences of chalcolithic, early historical and medieval deposits. The site has also been reported due to the presence of two magnificent medieval temples. Scholars have explored the site and the adjacent areas from time to time and have identified sites of different chronological periods. However, these exploration programs do not provide a complete picture of the archaeological record. No proper study of ceramics of this area has been conducted, which in reality remains the only artefactual marker in ascertaining the chronology of sites. An integrated picture of the archaeological record was thus lacking. In this backdrop, the researcher aimed at a holistic understanding of the archaeological record of the area. In order to accomplish this, the work has been divided into eight chapters.
The first chapter attempts to introduce the study area. In this chapter a brief introductory note on the study area has been incorporated following which, previous research, aims and objectives of the present study has been discussed. A brief discussion on the archaeological research undertaken in India and Bengal has been included and finally the methodology of the present work has been elaborately discussed with the limitations and a brief ending note.

The second chapter aims at elaborately discussing the geographical background of the present study area and highlighting the historical background of the region. In the course of discussion, the geology, soils, geomorphology, quaternary geology, land-use patterns of the area, flora, fauna, and climate has been discussed. Simultaneously, the history of the district Bankura has been discussed with special reference to the study area, which constitutes a large part of the district.

In the third chapter, the researcher has discussed about all the explored sites, with a special emphasis on the landscape of the river valley. The researcher, in this chapter, has given special emphasis on the survey methodology and also on the findings from the individual sites. The entire river valley has been divided into three micro-zones and the sites have been discussed in relation to the immediate landscape.

The fourth chapter attempts to give all the details of the excavated site Dihar. Though the excavation reports are lacking, the researcher has tried to collect the data through the published articles and has personally communicated with the excavator (R.K. Chattopadhyay) in order to provide detailed information about the site. The excavated ceramics of the site have been studied and reported in the present chapter. Since, Dihar is the only excavated site of the river valley, it has been considered to be a significant marker in understanding the explored sites in the river valley.

The next chapter attempts to highlight the nature and the context of the explored sites. The sites have been found in different contexts and it was important to understand the nature of the sites, according to the varying contexts of the sites. In this regard, the sites have been segregated into certain groups according to contexts and have been discussed individually. The major help has been drawn from the exposed sections which have additionally helped in understanding the nature of the cultural debris. Ten sites revealing exposed sections with cultural deposits have been taken up
individually for the discussion. Schematic drawing of the exposed sections and detailed site maps has been presented in the chapter.

The sixth chapter deals with the cultural repertoire of the explored sites. The only form of artefactual evidence which was abundantly found in the sites was pottery. Since ceramics have been considered as a significant marker in understanding the chronology of the sites, the explored potteries of the three chronological periods have been taken up one by one and have been discussed according to the individual wares and their respective forms and rest of the attributes like fabric, surface treatment and the technological aspects.

The seventh chapter discusses the settlement patterning of the area, which is intimately linked with the understanding of the nature and context of the explored archaeological sites. The patterning of the sites have been discussed according to the different chronological periods starting with the BRW sites, followed by the early historic sites and finally by the medieval ones. The terrain has been looked upon as the chief determining factor for the location and distribution of sites in the river valley. This discussion presents an interesting picture of the settlement pattern of the area of study.

The last chapter gives the concluding remarks about the present study. The researcher here has tried to put together all the important observations of the present archaeological investigations in the middle reaches of the Dwarakeswar river valley. The scope and the future prospects of the present study have also been discussed within the chapter.

The present endeavour is an attempt to understand the past landscape and the archaeological record of the area. There is still a lot to be done on the presently gathered archaeological data. The researcher hopes to continue the study in near future with a multidisciplinary approach, in order to present a more fruitful result. The medieval record presents an exceptional picture, which necessitates further probing and a detailed reading of the medieval texts. Hopefully, this work will lead to a complete understanding of the archaeological scenario in this hitherto unexplored/ little explored area of district Bankura.