PREFACE

The present work is essentially a documentation and interpretation of mechanisms involved in the production, circulation/distribution and consumption of iron in eastern India (from the initial iron using phase/phases to the Gupta period). It will not be unwise to make a note of the rationale behind selecting such an exclusive study on the use of iron in the eastern Indian context. The reasons are the following. 1) Plethora of source materials especially the ethno-archaeological data (from the present study area) prompted me to explore the nature of iron-using traditions that persisted for generations. To be more precise, the works of Valentine Ball, T. Oldham, E.R Watson and others of the colonial period have left us enough records to trace the trajectories of this development. 2. The researches on the use of iron in the Indian subcontinent have already ushered some integral problems and debates associated with it. Considering eastern India as an integral part of the subcontinent, it is pertinent to examine how far the eastern Indian database can be related (or form a part of) with the developments in the pan-Indian context. On the other hand, researches pertaining to various issues of eastern Indian archaeology certainly have innate connections with the use of iron. 3. Eastern India with her undulating landscapes of plateaus and plain-plateau continuum and their enormous resources, fertile river valleys flanked by fascinating stretches of eastern littorals and behavioural modes of their different population groups helped to develop some intra and inter-regional identities within a whole. It is therefore justified to explore and interpret the eastern Indian database and to evaluate its status in the general scenario of the subcontinent.