The Early Medieval Archaeology of the District of Murshidabad, West Bengal

AN ABSTRACT

The present Ph.D. work entitled ‘The Early Medieval Archaeology of the district of Murshidabad, West Bengal’ is primarily based on the author’s personal field survey and analysis of epigraphic and other archaeological sources (potteries, sculptures, architectural remains, etc.,) for explaining the early medieval paradigm as apparent from the enormous data recorded from the major and minor sites of the present study area, i.e., the district of Murshidabad. The present work divided into seven chapters delineates the settlement matrix of pre-Islamic Murshidabad with due emphasis on the antecedent stages as well as historical phenomena conceived through the ages.

So far as the chapterization is concerned, Chapter I of our work delineates the ‘Scope and Method of Study’ while the geographical setting of the district of Murshidabad is described in Chapter II. The archaeological remains of the Murshidabad district prior to the early medieval period have been discussed in Chapter III. Chapter IV delineates the literary and epigraphic sources of the district of Murshidabad. ‘The Early Medieval Sites and Settlements of Murshidabad’ have been dealt with in Chapter V. The subsequent chapter i.e Chapter VI analyzes the sculptural remains documented from different sites of the district. The conclusions made regarding different issues of the present study have been given in the last Chapter VII entitled ‘Summary and Observations’.

The western part of the Bhagirathi covering a major part of Murshidabad had witnessed the rise and growth of agrarian settlements since the BRW associated EVF phases. Apart from the wide distribution of BRW settlements the region reciprocated with the development of early historic settlements of both the middle Ganga valley i.e., (i) the south Bihar plain, along the adjoining parts of the lower Ganga valley and, (ii) the fringe areas of the Rajmahal hills, i.e., an extension of the upland area of the Chhotanagpur plateau. The major river valleys of the Bhagirathi, Mayurakshi and Ajay harboured different social groups associated with BRW using settlements. As apparent from our findings from the study area, it is clear that the BRW associated settlement matrix was a continuation, or that matter, an extension of the BRW associated phases witnessed in the bordering areas of the present district of Birbhum and Burdwan. These settlements gradually merged with the early historic settlement matrix. However, the major development of settlements may be associated with the rise of local political lineages particularly centering around Karnasuvvarna under the rule of Sasanka. The early medieval society which is the prime focus of this research was an outcome of the continuities of the above historical processes.

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