CHAPTER III

MURSHIDABAD: PRELUDE TO THE EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD

This chapter delineates the cultural sequences of the present study area prior to the early medieval period. Murshidabad has association with a long chrono-cultural development assignable to a period ranging from the microliths using phases till the modern times. Based on the available empirical data, retrieved so far, this chapter is an endeavour to place the locality of the district of Murshidabad, within a panoramic framework of archaeology. It is worth mentioning in this context that the present day ecological set up and the distribution pattern of population structure coupled with the corroborative archaeological remains will certainly contribute towards the reconstruction to the chrono-cultural framework of this region. The earliest reference of the Stone Age tools of the present study area was found from the site of Gitagram under the jurisdiction of the Bharatpur police station. The excavation at Hatpara under the Sagardighi PS by the DAWB, has unearthed microliths in association with other assemblages. Polished stone tools have also been found from the site of Gitagram. The excavation at Rājbāḍidāngā also yielded a couple of polished stone celts from inside a heavy deposition of brick-debris and objects of iron (mostly nails), copper, bronze and shell (IAR 1966-67: 47). During our field surveys in the district we have documented a significant number of polished stone tools from the study area. In this context we have also documented some polished stone tools from the border areas of the districts of Birbhum-Murshidabad and Burdwan-Murshidabad. Gitagram

The excavations at Rājbāḍīdāṅgā (DAS 1968), Nilkuthidanga (BANDYPADHYAY 2006-2007: 155-169), Dheka (IAR 2008-2009: 125-128), have yielded evidence of early historic archaeological remains. Besides these there are many sites from where archaeological remains of pre-Gupta and Gupta period have been reported.

The available archaeological data shows that, the antecedence of human settlements in the district of Murshidabad may be traced from the Mesolithic hunter gatherers. The excavated and explored data of microliths from the present study area have been discussed below.

THE MICROLITH USING PHASE

A distinct microliths using hunting – gathering phase is discernable from the region constituting the present district of Murshidabad. Microliths are one peculiar set of lithic artefacts which are generally associated with the Mesolithic culture; hence, they are chrono-culturally placed between the Palaeolithic and ‘Neolithic’/EVF cultural phases. Microlithic tools seem to serve as a marker of the tool-making culture/tradition at the beginning of the Holocene in most of the old world. In the period immediately preceding the introduction of farming and a food-producing economy in the north and western parts of the district, there existed groups of hunter-gatherers scattered over a variety of terrains. For most of the post-glacial period, there is lack of evidence regarding the subsistence pattern of the Mesolithic hunter-gatherers.
Earlier explorations recorded microliths from the locality of Saidurdanga in the village of Gitagram. Gitagram is located 12 kms south west of Bharatpur police station. Archaeologically this is one of the most important sites of the district of Murshidabad. The site has yielded neolithic celts, BRW, red ware, grey ware and other archaeological remains (IAR 1975-76: 57, CHAKRABORTY 2013: 54, DATTA 1995: 38). The exploration in the Gitagram region was conducted by Shri P. C. Das Gupta of the DAWB, and he was assisted by Shri D. K. Chakravarti and Dr S. C. Mukherji. The site Gitagram is located under the Bharatpur PS of the district of Murshidabad and on the right bank of a distributor of Mayurakshi and is 8 kms south west of Bharatpur (IAR 1975-76: 57). The present mound is now converted into a māzār and a graveyard.

The DAWB, conducted an exploration programme on the river bank of Bhagirathi in the district of Murshidabad. In course of exploration they discovered microlithic tools from the village of Chandpara situated under the Sagardighi PS (IAR 1977-78: 86). Microlithic debitages made of quartz have been found from the mound of Kherur along with archaeological remains (CHAKRABARTI et al 1993; 132)

An excavation was conducted at the mound of Chand Thakurer Danga in the village of Hatpara under Sagardighi PS. The site is located 4 kms west of Sagardighi. The site was excavated by the DAWB during the field seasons of 2007-08 and 2008-09. During the first season one trench (four quadrants) was taken for excavation. The first season revealed a two-fold cultural sequence i.e. Period I belongs to the late Pleistocene age (Microlithic culture) and Period II belongs to medieval times (Sultanate period) (NEWS LETTER, CASTEI 2009: 22). The excavation was resumed in the next year and several trenches were taken for digging. The purpose of the digging was to know the cultural sequences and nature of
deposits. The result of excavation was the same as the earlier one. The excavations revealed common types of microliths of siliceous rocks. The Sultanate period has yielded various antiquities and potteries like glazed wares. The microliths may be divided into two categories i.e. geometric and non-geometric. Beside these, some cores and debitage, have also been unearthed (Plate - I.A).

**POLISHED STONE TOOLS**

In the Three Age System by C. J. Thomsen (see Thomsen cited in DANIEL 1981) the Palaeolithic phase is supposed by the Mesolithic and the comparatively sophisticated hunting/gathering system of subsistence of the Mesolithic phase is likely to be succeeded by the Neolithic phase of culture with sedentary agriculture supplemented by cattle breeding, followed finally by the proto-historic stage characterized by limited but simultaneous use of metal and stone technologies settle farming village. The model is good enough to explain the development and change of culture within a limited geographical area, but it cannot operate in a wider area of geographical context with diverse climatic and environmental features. (DATTA 1981; DATTA & SANYAL 2013: 1)

The Neoliths, (or, the ground/polished stone tools) by which we mean a category of artefacts prepared in three major stages – pecking, grinding and polishing, typologically comprise celts, adzes, chisels, bar-chisels, pegs and milling tools like ring stones, mullers/saddle querns, pestles bolas and other minor lithic objects (CHATTOPADHYAY 2013 et.al. 119). Stratigraphic evidence supported by radio carbon dates suggest that the Neolithic culture in India flourished in different areas between the mid-third millennium BCE and the beginning of the historical period. The
latest calibrated radio carbon date range of Barudih Neolithic is 1404-437 BCE. During the same period of time the Chalcolithic culture of Central India and Deccan, the Megalithic culture of south India having BRW as major ceramic type and the Chalcolithic/BRW bearing culture of eastern India, were also flourishing in their respective eco-zones (DATTA & SANYAL 2013: 4-5).

A large number of ground/polished stone tools have been found from eastern India in different geographical and archaeological contexts. Polished stone tools have been found in the stratigraphical context and from excavated trenches. Beside these, there are a significant number of ground and polished stone tools which are placed and installed under trees along with village deities, for the purpose of daily worship. We have often encountered during our earlier as well as recent explorations, enshrined ground and polished stone tools in several temples where they have attained iconic status. In several temples, they have been permanently placed on the main alter beside the enshrined images. A large number of such tools are presently in the collection of several institutions and private collection. In recent years, the excavations and explorations carried out in the districts of Murshidabad, Burdwan and South 24 - Parganas by the DAWB resulted in the discovery of more ground polished stone tools found either from the surface of mounds or otherwise, and they are yet to be reported (CHATTOPADHYAY et.al 2013 161-162). In several parts of eastern India, major polished stone tools are found to be venerated and worshipped for generations and they are considered auspicious or holy especially in memory of the predecessors. The findings of the polished stone tools of the study area are given below.
1. **Tildanga:** (24°47′21″N, 87°52′34″E)

Tildanga is located 2 kms north-west of Farakka Thermal Power Station near the Farakka Barrage. This is one of the large settlements located at the confluence of the rivers of Gumani and Ganga. In a modern temple of the village of Tildanga, a polished stone tool is worshipped by the villagers (**Plate - I.B**). The highly polished and slightly convex contour specimen has an elongated butt end and a broad and elongated cutting edge. The specimen measures 24.4 cm in length, 9.3 cm in breadth cm and 5.5 cm in thickness (**Figure – I.B**).

2. **Joypur:** (24°07′59″N, 87°56′44″E)

Three polished tools are kept in the Matai temple of the village of Joypur along with sculptural and architectural members. The temple is located at the outskirts of the Joypur village. The village Joypur is located 10 kms north of the Khargram PS of Kandi sub-division.

Of these ground and polished stone tools, the first is an adze. It is a complete specimen. The specimen measures 13 cm length, 8 cm in breadth cm and 3 cm in thickness (**Plate – I.C**). The specimen is of black basalt. The working end is ground and polished, and the tool has a rectangular cross section at the middle (**Figure - II.D**). The second specimen (**Plate – II.A**) measuring (11x7x2.5cm), made of the same raw material, is partly broken on both sides (**Figure - II.C**). The third specimen is a fragmentary of a celt and this could be either an axe or a chisel. The butt-end is broken and the cutting edge is mostly broken (**Plate – II.B**), the specimen measures (8x5.5x2) cm (**Figure – II.B**).
3. **Gayeshpur**: (24°02‘25”N, 87°56’50”E)

The village of Gayeshpur is located 5 kms south-west of Khargram PS of Kandi sub-division. A polished stone tool is now worshipped in a medieval terracotta temple along with other sculptural fragments. The specimen is a relatively crude, tiny and fragmented celt measuring 9.5cm x 6cm x 3.2 cm *(Figure – I.C)* with both sides having a convex slope and flat butt-end. The sharp working edge is broken *(Plate – II.C)*.

4. **Paruliya (Bharta)**: (24°04‘50”N, 87°54’36”E)

The archaeological site of Paruliya is located under the Khargram PS. A beautiful and partly fragmented celt has been found from the village of Bharta and now kept in a temple known as Bharta Sarbajanin Mandir. The specimen measures 21 cm in length, 9 cm in breadth cm and 5 cm *(Figure I.A)* in thickness *(Plate – II.D)*. It is presently worshipped along with fragments of sculptures and architectural members. The implement was flaked and pecked and its entire surface was then polished. The butt end or pole end is pointed and the two sides are roughly straight. The working end consists of a sharp cutting edge, which was carefully polished. It has an oval cross section with the inner surface slightly flattened.

5. **Punia**: (24°05’29”N, 87°56’09”E)

Two ground and polished stone tools have been reported from the village of Punia and they are presently in the Kanaidanga Mahato Ashram along with other sculptural and architectural fragments. The first specimen measures 24.4 cm in length, 9.3 cm in breadth *(Plate - III.A and Figure – I.D)* cm and 5.5 cm. in thick and the second
specimen measures 10 cm in length, 5.5 cm in breadth cm and 3.5 thick (Plate - III.B and Figure – II.D).

6. Rājbāḍīdāngā: (24°01′47″N, 88°11′29″E)

The excavated site of Rājbāḍīdāngā has yielded two polished stone celts. These two have been found along with other assemblages (IAR 1966-67: 47).

**BRW associated Phase**

The BRW associated EVF phase in West Bengal is roughly from the middle of the second millennium B.C. (or about two centuries earlier) to about 500 B.C. (or little later). This phase is also known as the EVF culture which has been studied by several scholars of eastern Indian archaeology. There are different terminologies ascribed to this particular period such as ‘Chalcolithic’, ‘Protohistoric’, Ferro-chalcolithic’, Early Farming (CHATTOPADHYAY, SANYAL & BANDOPADHYAY 2007: 68-93) and even Osteo-chalcolithic culture (SINHA 2002: 322-55). The BRW phase in West Bengal was initially studied in the 1960s (DASGUPTA 1965), and since then a large number of sites have been explored and excavated. In the district of Murshidabad the presence of BRW was first noticed by the DAWB from Gitagram (IAR 1975-76: 57, DATTA 1995: 38) Farakka (BANERJEE 1992-93: 193-209). The associated potteries of Farakka are black slipped ware, red ware and grey ware. Another reported site is Kherur (CHAKRABARTI et.al. 1993: 123).

1. Kherur: (24°20′55″N, 88°04′57″E)

The site of Kherur has been reported by several scholars. It is located 3 kms west of Manigram railway station, under the
jurisdiction of the Sagardighi PS. The site is known for a beautiful mosque of the 16th century CE with terracotta embellishments and it is presently protected by the Archaeological Survey of India. This is one of the earliest and beautiful mosques of this area. This site has probably a long cultural sequence as attested by the black-and-red ware sherds scattered over the major part of this village. Kherur has been considered as a site which had its genesis probably from the EVF phases and the settlement continued till the modern times. Architectural remains of stone and bricks, besides, different types of potsherds of black-and-red ware (Plate – III.C), red ware, grey ware, black ware and red slipped ware and other habitational remains constitute the archaeological heritage of this site (CHAKRABARTI et.al. 1993: 123).

2. **Gitagram: (23°50’17”N, 88°01’04”E)**

   This remarkable site is located on the right bank of a distributor of Mayurakshi and is 8 kms south west of Bharatpur. Most of the mound has been converted into an agricultural field. During 1928-29 the area was surveyed by K.N. Dikshit (DIKSHIT 1990: 98). The site was again explored by the DAWB, under the leadership of P.C. Dasgupta. The exploration at the mound of Saidurdanga has yielded neolithic celts and chalcolithic pottery, including red, black-and-red and grey wares, besides microlithic flakes and beads of semi-precious stones (IAR 1977-78: 57). Moreover, the main mound presently, occupied by a modern burial ground (māzār), could not be adequately surveyed. In fact, the māzār complex did not allow surface exploration. The present size of the mound is roughly 60x30 square meter. The mound is now converted into an agricultural field (CHAKRABORTY 2013: 54). Gitagram is
one of the most important archaeological sites of the district. The entire mound is almost covered by the present settlement. During our field survey, we encountered several numbers of BRW besides other potteries (Plate – IV.A).

3. **Indrani**: (24°08’05”N, 88°01’02”E)

    This village is located under the Khargram PS and is 38 kms west of Baharampur. According to the oral tradition the name of the village has been derived from the name of Indra, the mansabdar of Osman and son of Kotul Khan. This remarkable site is situated on the right bank of the river Indrani. The total area of the site is 1 square km and bears a long cultural sequence. The average height of the mound is 2.5 m. Brick structures, large water bodies and abundant potsherds are scattered throughout the village. During our field survey we encountered degenerated BRW, red ware, red slipped ware, black slipped ware, grey ware, black ware and others. The village has two terracotta temples of a later date. The present habitation is discernible on an ancient mound. On the burial ground at the highest part of the mound, there are four decorated architectural members. Three other architectural members are lying in front of the mosque.

4. **Alugram**: (23°54’22”N 88°05’50”E):

    The place is an important archaeological site, situated on the right bank of the river Mayurakshi and is about 4 kms north of Bharatpur. At the centre of the village there is a mound (PLATE – XV.C). The mound is strewn with ancient structural vestiges which certainly highlight the occurrence of settlement in this area. At present the site possesses a terracotta temple complex of the late
medieval period. The locality also contains innumerable fragmented pieces of sculptural remains and architectural members. Beside these archaeological materials, the site also yielded habitational remains like potsherds of red ware, red slipped ware, red and black ware and black ware and others.

5. **Farakka**: (24°47’17”N, 87°54’39”E)

The archaeological site of Farakka is famous for the historical period. Different types of archaeological materials have been found from the site. A few number of degenerated BRW have been found from the site along with terracotta objects and other archaeological remains. The explored BRWs and other potteries are kept in the State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata (BANERJEE 1992-93: 193-209).

**Early History and Historical sites**

It is difficult to visualize a well defined early historic phase in this region as the evidences recorded so far amply testify the fact that the EVF culture continued here for a longer period of time and gradually merged as in to the later. However, the influence of pan-Indian development along the Ganga Valley, particularly the middle and the lower Gangetic plains are present in the study area. The explored materials and chance discoveries from the study area reveal that the people of this region reciprocated with the said surrounding in terms of exchange of culture and economy.

1. **Farakka**: (24°47’17”N, 87°54’39”E)

The present town of Farakka is located in the extreme north of the district of Murshidabad. The area is now famous for the huge
barrage on the river Ganga. The Farakka barrage project was started in the year 1976. During the construction of the barrage some archaeological materials were found or unearthed from the project site. The archaeological importance of these findings was first noticed by P. Sachidananda, an engineer of the Farakka Barrage Project. To understand the archaeological importance of the Farakka, the site was visited by a group of archaeologists headed by Sudhin De of the DAWB. The team extensively explored the site and excavated at different places to unearth the archaeological remains of the area. The site at Farakka, near the confluence of the Bhagirathi and the Gumani, in District Murshidabad, yielded early historical remains, including ring-wells, terracotta figurines such as Mother Goddess, mother and child, male and animal figurines, silver punchmarked coins, beads of semi-precious stones, bone and shell objects, antlers, sling balls, netsinkers, and flesh-rubbers (IAR 1975-76: 57).

The site has yielded degenerated BRW and other potsherds. The explored areas were marked as site I and site II. According to the investigator, the habitation started from the Maurya period with certain breaks and continued up to the medieval period (BANERJEE 1992-93: 194). The explorations and excavations at the site have yielded terracotta objects assignable to the 3rd century BCE to 2nd century CE. The site has yielded different types of which can be dated with a time bracket ranging from 3rd century BCE to 2nd century CE. Among the unearthed terracotta object mention should be made of figurine of mother and child, animal figurines and mother goddess (BISWAS 1981:112).
Apart from a few sherds of degenerated BRW, few red ware, red slipped ware, black slipped ware and grey ware have been found. Almost all the potteries were made in wheel and well levigated clay was used. Among the shapes mention should be made of loop handled pans or basins, lipped bowl, dishes, plain bowl, channel spouted bowl and single and double spouted vessel. There are some miniature potteries of pots and bowls which have been recorded from the area. The necks are very small varying from 3.2 cm to 1 cm. The average heights of the pots are from 7.6 cm to 4.1 cm. Clay lamps, clay dabbers, net sinkers and terracotta beads have also been found.

The site has also yielded sixteen silver punch-marked coins. The weight of the coins varies from 3.45000 gms to 2.41084 gms. The largest size of the coin is 1.6cmx1.6cm and the smallest one is 0.7cmx0.7cm. The shapes of the coins are circular, semi-circular, square, rectangular prismatic and others. Solar, circular with dots, animal heads, mountain, deer, flower, bull, elephant moon, *stupa*, wheel, etc. the main designs are depicted on the coins.

2. **Giyasabad**: (24°17’55”N, 88°11’36”E)

Ancient Badrihat or present Giasabad or Gayasabad is one of the most important archaeological sites of the district of Murshidabad. It is located on the right bank of the river Bhagirathi and is 12 kms north east of Sagardighi (BANDOPADHYAYA 1982: 37). There are several mounds on which some modern settlements have developed. In 1854, Captain Layard had reported some stone inscriptions in Pali, gold coins and different types of potsherds from this site (LAYARD 1853: 281-283). The local villagers have
reported that still some gold coins are occasionally found from this area. At present there are some habitational mounds with scattered architectural and other remains. It is evident from a thorough survey of this village that most of the modern habitations are built on early medieval structural mounds. The architectural remains surely betray the use of earlier structural remains. Some of the earlier structural remains which were reused bear very short inscriptions (palaeographically assignable to the 6<sup>th</sup> /7<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. and probably donative in nature) on their surfaces. The inscriptions are in post-Gupta Brahmi. In a modern temple an unidentified image is now worshipped as Śiva along with a Śivaliṅga and decorative architectural appendages. Recent digging activities for the making of a brick-field in and around Gobardhandanga of Giyasabad (PL. IIId) area have yielded sculptural fragments, a huge decorated door-jamb (260x53x33cm) along with other cultural materials. At the centre of the door-jamb there is a depiction of Gaṇeśa. The extensive scattering of architectural members indicates that there was a temple probably of the early medieval period.

3. **Laksmihut**: (24°18′18″N, 88°11′18″E)

Another ancient settlement is Lakshmihat, very close to the Hukarhat area. There is a mound yielding habitational remains in form of potsherds and other archaeological remains of the different periods. Recently the area has been levelled by the owner of the land which exposed a one metre thick cultural deposit containing potsherds in the exposed section. According to the local people, different types of antiquities especially in form of coins have been
exposed, after a heavy downpour. During our field visit, we could not trace out any antiquities except the potsherds.

“Shri P. C. Das Gupta of the Department of Archaeology, Government of West Bengal, explored an extensive site near Jangipore by the side of the ancient bed of the Bhagirathi. Two gold coins of Narsimha Gupta Baladitya had been obtained earlier from surface of the main mound. The main mound is locally known as Lakshmi Hatir Danga. The pottery collected from the site included thick storage jars, spouted vessels and decorative pan-handles and lids. Examples of pre-Mughal glazed Ware were also found.” (IAR 1971-72: 50)

4. **Gankar**: (24°24’43”N, 88°05’08”E)

Archeologically this is another important site of the district of Murshidabad. The site is located on the right bank of the spill off channel of the main river Bhagirathi. Raghunathgunj town is located 8 kms north of the site of Gankar. During the medieval period, the settlement was known as Ganguri. The present settlement is full of ancient structural remins of bricks and stone. There are several mounds locally known as “dhipi” in the village which are collectively called as Masuridanga. All these are the ruins of old structural and habitational remains of the earlier period. There are decorated stone pillars of the early medieval period. The village also yielded different types of potsherds. In an open space of the village different types of Śivaliṅgas are now worshipped. The tentative chorology of the village ranges from the historical period to the modern times.
On 31 May 2013, some Gupta gold coins were discovered from Murshidabad district of West Bengal, after the discovery of the Hasnan hoard in 12 November 1974 from Hasnan village in Hooghly District (CHAKRABARTY 1977: 757) and Bainchigram hoard in 1981-82 from Bainchigram village in Hooghly District (BANIK 2016: 66). Details of the discovery were reported in the newspapers. During the construction and expansion of the western part of the NH 34, a contractor company was collecting soil from Gankar and Umarpur areas of Murshidabad and unloading it on the western part of the Highway near a place called Ahiron. After a heavy rainfall, around hundred odd gold coins were noticed by the labourers, which were mixed in the clayey earth. The road contractor Rajanikanta Mahapatra assumed that the villagers located the gold coins from the black soil of Gankar and loamy soil of Umarpur. Only eleven gold coins were recovered after the intervention of local administration and subsequently ceased by the local authority (BANIK 2016: 58). The earliest coin of this truncated coin-hoard is of Chandragupta II and the latest coin of this truncated coin-hoard is of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya. The time difference between the earliest and the latest coin of the truncated coin-hoard is about one hundred and fifty years. So perhaps it is a long-term savings coin-hoard (truncated). All the eleven gold coins belong to a single dynasty. (BANIK 2016: 61) (Plate – XXXIII and See table – 1)

5. Jaipur: (24°07’59”N, 87°56’44”E)

The archaeological site of Jaipur is located about 10 kms west of Sherpur, under Bharatpur PS. It can also be reached through bus route from Baharampur or Kandi via Sherpur. The village is famous for an ancient water tank, "Hotar Dighi". On both the eastern and
western banks of the pond there is a large structural mound locally known as ‘*Hotargarh*’ or ‘*Badobadidanga*’. It was the seat of a Zamindar family of this region. There are many legends about the origin and rule of the Krisnenda Hota (BANDOPADHYAYA 1982: 69). The ruling period of the Hota family and their remains comprising tanks, old fortifications, temples and other remains are usually dated to the late medieval period. Here the names of certain places are still known by their old names. In this village there is a modern temple known as Matai temple, from where we recorded a few Brahmanical icons inside the *garbhagriha* of this temple. There are three celts (13×8×3 cm; 11×7×2 cm; 8×5.5×2 cm). Just about 1 km away from the Jaypur Gram-Panchayat there is a place name Singul where we recorded found two beautiful stone sculptures of Viṣṇu and un-identified deity (Buddhist?). The elevated ground of the village has yielded habitational remains, besides red ware, red slipped ware, black ware, black slipped ware, grey ware and others.

6. **Sherpur:** (24°07′47″N, 88°00′20″E)

   The name of the village Sherpur has been derived from the name of Shershah. Sherpur is just located just south of village of Indrani (BANDOPADHYAYA 1982: 68). There is a noteworthy mosque in this village which however has lost its former beauty after an unscientific renovation. Sherpur has yielded architectural remains, besides early historic potteries and other archaeological remains.

7. **Rājbāḍidāngā:** (24°01′47″N, 88°11′29″E)

   The site is located on the right bank of the river Bhagirathi or more precisely a dried up channel of Bhagirathi, and 15 kms south of
Baharampur, the district headquarter of Murshidabad. The site was visited in the fourth decade of the seventh century CE by the Chinese traveller Hsuan-tsang, who referred to an existing monastery of the site, known as Lo-to-wei-chi i.e. Raktamṛittikā (BEAL 1981: 191). The site was first noticed by Captain Layard in the year 1853 who published an article entitled ‘The ancient city of Kansonapuri Now Called Rungamutty’ in the Journal of the Asiatic Society’s Journal (LAYARD 1853).

The excavation at Rājbāḍīdāṅgā revealed that most of the trenches disclosed tremendous disturbances of brick hunting, pit-digging and other activities. A few trenches yielded a well determined stratified layer. On the basis of the excavated materials, mostly the inscribed seals, the cultural sequences of the study area are as follows.

**Period - I** (Early) From c. second-third century to c. fourth-fifth century CE

**Period - II** (Middle) From c. fifth-sixth century to c. ninth-tenth century CE

**Period - III** (Late) From c. ninth-tenth century to c. twelfth-thirteenth century CE

It is clear that the mound was under occupation from c. second-third century CE to c. twelfth-thirteenth century CE.

**Structural Remains:** the excavation at Rājbāḍīdāṅgā reveals a prolific building activity. The digging at the different trenches has yielded different structural activities of the different period (Plate IX.A). According to the excavator the mound has been divided in to five phases of structural activities. The phases are as follows.
Phase I disclosed parts of wall built on natural soil. Phase II comprised walls and platforms built on sandy silt deposition. These two phases belongs to a period earlier than the fifth century CE. The excavator suggests that there was no absolute datable material to ascertain the time brackets of the phase. These phases have yielded some terracotta figurines which are tentatively datable to the pre-Gupta period.

Phase III yielded conspicuous platform, circular structures, staircase, step-pavement, etc. This is the most prosperous phase of the mound and datable to c fifth-sixth century CE to seventh-eighth century CE. The dating has been done on the basis of availability of the inscribed seals and sealings.

Phase IV yielded evidence of walls and corresponding floor, etc. This phase indicates the addition of another structure with the main structure. The later structure has lime plastered floor. The structural activities of the phases III and IV provide a complete plan of the monastery.

Phase V yielded evidences of enclosure walls, floor, square structures etc. Imposing architectural remains, mostly consisting of a compound wall enclosing four small square shrines at its four corners and lime plaster floor covering the entire area found from phase V, might be attributed to c tenth to twelfth centuries CE. From phase VI brickbat-lying platform with post holes, floors and walls were also unearthed. This phase probably continued till twelfth-thirteen century CE. After this phase the site was probably deserted (DAS 1968). (For Further Discussion see Chapter V)
8. **Nilkuthidanga**: (24°01′08″N, 88°11′33″E)

   During the 19th century a high elevated mound was occupied by the East India Company. They installed a brick tower for preparing indigo. This area of Mauza Chak Chandpara is now known as Nilkuthidanga. Nilkuthi mound (2402 N and 881218 E) is located at a distance of 17 kms south of Baharampur town, the district headquarter of Murshidabad and 1 km south of Rājbāḍīdāngā. A series of mound is located in the present villages of Chandpara, Chiruti, Jadupur, Rāṅgāmāṭi and Sanyasidanga.

   In the field season of 2005-06 the archaeological mound of Nilkuthidanga was excavated by Bimal Bandyopadhyaya, Superintendent Archaeologist of Kolkata Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India. The aims of the excavation at Nilkuthidanga mound were to trace the stratification of the site, the habitation area of Karṇasuvaraṇa, and the capital city of Śaśāṅka. The prime objective of the excavator was ‘to establish the link between the religious establishment and normal dwelling area of the city’. Twelve trenches (10X10m) were taken for excavation. Some of the trenches were excavated up to the natural soil (5.82 m from surface). The total deposits of the mound have been divided into six layers. The excavation did not unearth any huge structural activities. The huge number of antiquities unearthed would definitely prove the prosperity of the people who occupied the site through the ages. The discovery of two rings wells are also definite indications of the habitational character of the site. In some of the trenches, the topmost layer has walls and platforms constructed with modern bricks. The findings from the topmost layer indicate the 19th century activities of the indigo planters.
The excavation has yielded different types of antiquities. The upper layer has yielded some timeless terracotta female figurines and animal figurines besides a few silver coins of the Sultanate period. Other findings from the upper layer include beads of terracotta, semi-precious stones, dabber, discs, wheels, terracotta toy objects, iron objects, etc. The lower level has yielded antiquities of Kushana, Gupta and post-Gupta period. The unearthed sculptural remains are assignable from 2nd - 3rd century CE to 9th century CE. These sculptures are made of terracotta; stone and stucco. The sculptures may be divided into Brahmanical and Buddhist. The excavation at Nilkuthi mound has unearthed inscribed personal seals and sealings. The excavation also unearthed beads of different mediums, terracotta plaques, iron objects and others. The mound has a long cultural sequences ranging from the Kushana period to the 14th-15th centuries CE. According to the excavator the Nilkuthi mound was occupied for a considerable period of time. Perhaps the dwellings of the earlier period were built in perishable materials and therefore could not survive the ravages of time.

A significant number of terracottas have been found from the excavation. Most of them are datable to the Gupta and post-Gupta period. A head of Buddha and Bodhisttava and a female figure of the Gupta period has been found from the excavation, besides a stone image of Sūrya in low relief. According to the excavator the Sūrya image can be dated to c. 2nd - 3rd century CE, therefore the oldest Sūrya image of Bengal. Besides these some inscribed seals and sealings of 4th - 7th century CE have also been found from the site (BANDYOPADHYAYA 2006-2007:155-169).
9. **Dheka: (23°55′03″N, 87°58′57″E)**

The excavated mound of Doilopar (also called Dohalia Par and Deulesvar) is located (23° 55' 08'"; 87°59' 21'") within the village Dheka under the Sabalpur Gram Panchayat, Mouza Bichkandi (JL no. 125), Kandi sub-division. The mound is also known as Hari Rajar Garh. It is well connected with Kandi town, 15kms away, by a good motorable road and is at the extreme west near the Idgah. The site is associated with strong religious beliefs of both the Hindu and Muslim communities. The mound of Doilopar (also called Dohalia Par and Deulesvar) was excavated by the DAWB.

As the seals were collected from the contemporary layers of the depositions of the structure belonging to phase I, it may be assumed that structural activity at the site started from the fifth/sixth century CE and continued up to seventh century CE, i.e., prior to the Palas. The nature of the structures, brick-sizes and pottery do not provide any evidence of the cultural traits of the Pala period. The entire stratigraphy has been divided into three cultural phases.

The main objective of the excavation was to know the nature of the buried structures along with the chronological sequence at the site. The excavation has revealed three phases of structural activities. The early structural activity during the first phase was marked by structures of smaller dimensions, use of bigger bricks and platforms. The second phase of structural activity is marked by the use of comparatively smaller bricks and significant use of moulded bricks. The exterior surface shows the use of plaster (lime and sand) with various designs and stucco. The average thickness of the wall is
2.00m. The use of moulded bricks at the base of the exterior of the wall provides elegance to the structure by giving it better dimensions. The bricks used are well-burnt; the clay-mortar is fine and sticky. The veneering bricks are bigger in size and the bricks used in the core of the structure are irregular and of different sizes. The superstructure has been vandalized by brick hunting and the mound is also used as a play ground. The remaining parts of this structure and other antiquarian remains did not provide any definite clue to ascertain the nature of the structure.

Several antiquities were recovered from the layer 1 including terracotta balls (two), terracotta lamps (two), unidentified terracotta object (one), iron slag (one) and unidentified iron object (one). Two seals with legible scripts provide a date for the site. Palaeographically, the seals may be assigned to circa fifth/sixth century CE, on the basis of the so-called Gupta features with verticals showing no indication towards formation of a slope or twist towards the right, as is the characteristic of a later period. The headmarks on the top are also not as developed as in the later period scripts such as Siddhamatrika or Kutila. The legends are vijayachandrasya and vainya as deciphered by Suresh Chandra Bhattacharya.

A large number of potsherds were collected during the excavation. After studying the assemblage, it was found that red wares are predominant while the grey and black wares are less in number. The qualities of the sherds do not indicate an impressive and developed ceramic industry at the site, though a few pieces of orange-red ware, micaceous red ware, chocolate wares and black
wares of thin fabric have been collected from the site. Incised designs on both the exterior and interior are available in limited cases. Most of the sherds are of thick variety and wheel-made, while those of thin fabric, made out of well-levigated clay are limited. Among the types, mention may be made of vase, jar, cooking vessel with carinated body and handle, fry-pan, spouted-vase, bowl, bowl-cum-lid, knobbed-lid, lamp-stand, basin, trough, etc. Among other shapes, terracotta lamps with flat base and rudimentary burning notch as well as bowls with corrugated surface and rimless, thick vertical edge are common. Through a comparative analysis of similar Pala-period antiquities, it has been ascertained that the site belongs to the pre-Pala period. This corroborates the palaeographic evidence of the seals. All the antiquities and structural components, so far exposed through the initial diggings, indicate that Dheka was under occupation during the sixth/seventh century CE. (IAR 2008-2009: 125-128) (For Further Discussion see Chapter V)

10. **Ugura**: (24°05’41″N, 88°09’14″E)

This is another important and large structural and habitational mound located under Kandi police station of Kandi sub-division. The present village Ugura is located 15 kms west of Baharampur, on Kandi – Baharampur road. The site was excavated by the DAWB. A trial trench was taken to know the cultural sequences of the site. The exaction report is yet to be published. This ancient mound has yielded terracotta objects, architectural members, potsherds, iron objects and sculptural remains. Structural remains are visible on the surface of the mound, however, the nature of the structure is difficult to ascertain. The excavation at the site has yielded different types of potsherds i.e. red slipped ware, red ware, black slipped ware, grey
ware and others. The fabrics of the potsherds are of different types, fine, medium and coarse. An inscribed standing Buddha image along with other sculptural fragments are now kept under a pipal tree. Presently the ancient mound is partly covered with modern habitation (*Plate No – IX.D and IX.E*).

Archaeological research in the district goes back to the 19th century, but the surveys and excavations were erratic. A systematic survey of the district is a desideratum. The basic purpose of this chapter is to study the distribution of different types of sites and artefacts in this region and the reconstruction of these findings in the light of chrono-cultural sequence, hitherto unattempted. However, we don’t claim that our field surveys were, in any sense, exhaustive but at the same time some care was taken to ensure that no representative site or data was left or omitted. A fairly large number of archaeological data is yet to unfolded or studied with a proper perspective and/or theoretical framework. The time span covered in this work is admittedly immense i.e. from the prehistoric to the historical period.

The chrono-cultural sequence of the region, as envisaged during the course of the present survey, can be summed up in the following points.

1. So far as the microlithic period is concerned only three archaeological sites have yielded microliths. Kherur and Gitagram are the site from where we have found microliths from the surface or exposed sections of a few areas. Hatpara is the only site which yielded microliths in a stratified context. These microliths have been dated to the late Pliestocene period. This
region certainly witnessed the movement of hunting-gathering communities.

2. The evidence of polished stone tools, hitherto reported from the study area, when compared to other adjoining areas, is relatively scanty in nature. The stratigraphic contexts of most of such are yet to be ascertained except for those recorded from the excavation at Rājbāḍīdāngā.

3. The beginning of sedentism along with the EVF culture broadly defined as the Protohistoric phase and associated with metal may be traced to the middle of the first Millenium BCE. This phase is based on an agro-pastoral economy. The region confirms the cultural matrix associated with farming activities. An independent Chalcolithic horizon of this region is quite difficult to ascertain. It may be noted that further scientific excavation at the BRW producing sites will throw fresh light on the nature of the EVF phase/phases of the district of Murshidabad.

4. So far as the early historic period is concerned, one may notice the distribution of the punch-marked coins and cast copper coins found from the Farakka region and gold coins of the Gupta period recorded from the Sagardighi area, which suggest the probable existence of an organized money economy, in the early historical period. Besides, there are also other substantial evidences in form of black slipped ware, red slipped ware and BRW, the ceramics of the Sunga - Kushana period specially bowls, terracotta figurines and other types of diagnostic artefacts, recovered from the excavation at Nilkuthidanga. The ancient network of navigable rivers like the Bhagirathi certainly played an important role for trading activities, and procurement of raw materials.