CHAPTER VIII
CHRONOLOGY

Except a small trial digging to understand the stratigraphical position of the Neolithic ceramic industry, no other excavation is carried out in this region to discuss the chronology of the various other cultures, also there are no datable materials available. So far as the Early, Middle and Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods are concerned, we have to depend upon the comparison of the materials with those from other well studied sites in the adjacent North Karnataka region.

While concluding his observations after the typological study of the Malaprabha Palaeolithic industry, Joshi (1955) is of the opinion that the industry is mainly Acheulian and belongs most probably to the "Middle Pleistocene period". The Upper Krishna basin Lower Palaeolithic industry on typological grounds "belongs to the end phase of Middle Acheulian and therefore tentatively assigned to the Middle or Upper Pleistocene period" (Pappu, 1974).

Similarly for Middle Palaeolithic industry in the Upper Krishna basin, C-14 dates are available. The older Alluvium yielding Middle Palaeolithic artefacts there is dated to 30,000 – 39,000 years B.P. Therefore, it is of "Upper Pleistocene" period (Pappu, 1974). Deposits yielding Middle Palaeoliths in the Hunsagi valley at Wajjal has been tentatively assigned to the "Late Pleistocene" (Badam, 1979).

In the absence of faunal remains associated with lithic industries in the region under study, it is rather difficult to provide firm dating of Pleistocene deposits in various river valleys. However, on the basis of typo-technological similarities with the industries of the Malaprabha and the Upper Krishna basin, for the Lower and Middle Palaeolithic industries of the Malnad region, the probable date ranges suggested by Joshi (1955), Pappu (1974), Ansari (1970) and Badam (1979).
As regards the chronological position of the Upper Palaeolithic culture in the region under study, it is necessary to have much more extensive survey. So far, only one site has been noticed in the entire region and therefore difficult to place it in proper time-scale of Pleistocene due to lack of proper stratigraphy. However, on analogy, the Upper Palaeolithic tool assemblage of the Malnad is almost akin to the blade-tool industry of the Shorapur Doab (Paddayya, 1970) which in turn compare closely with the Rallakalava industry of Chittoor district. Comparing the Shorapur Doab blade industry and Rallakalava industry, Paddayya observes "both are based on the production of blade tools and again both belong to the Late Upper Pleistocene/early part of the sub-recent period and occupy an intermediary position between the Middle Stone Age and the Late Stone Age industries".

Although clear-cut stratigraphical evidence is lacking, on typo-technological grounds, the Malnad Upper Palaeolithic tool assemblage could be compared to the Shorapur Doab industry and the date range suggested for it by Paddayya may hold good for the present.

But in so far as the Mesolithic is concerned, the recent studies in the Belan valley (Sharma, 1980), Sanganakallu (Sankalia, 1965), etc., provide a better basis for understanding the period of the Mesolithic culture in the Malnad region.

At Sanganakallu, at least two distinct and in the Belan valley three distinct stages of the culture have been recognised. The three categories of the sites in the Malnad region broadly seem to correspond, from the point of their situation and the pattern of tool types, to the three stages in the Belan valley. The Mesolithic sites of category I invariably found in gravel exposures seem to be the earliest and may be dated between 10,000 and 700 B.C. The Mesolithic sites of the III category seem to overlap with the Neolithic culture in
the survival stage and therefore may be dated between 5000 and 2000 B.C. The Mesolithic sites of the middle category II similar in types to those of I category but smaller in size and located in open hilly ground at higher altitude seem to precede the III category and succeed the I category, they may, therefore be dated 7000-5000 B.C.

Now with regard to the Neolithic culture of the Malnad, it is noticed that the cultural remains are more akin to those of Hallur (Nagaraja Rao, 1971) of the Upper Tungabhadra on one hand and T. Narasipur (Sheshadri, 1974) of the Middle Kaveri on the other. The cultures in the latter two sites are both stratigraphically and by C-14 method are dated to 1800 to 1000 B.C. So, the Malnad Neolithic culture, therefore, may be dated to 1800-1000 B.C., if not earlier. In Hallur, the upper limit of the culture is dated to 1500 to 1100 B.C. because of the datable intrusion of the Chalcolithic culture characterised by parallel sided blades and microliths, i.e., made on fine grained rock material of black Jasper and Black on Red painted pottery pieces, of Jorwe fabric in very small number.

Although typical Chalcolithic cultural aspects are absent in the region, the White painted Black and Red ware (essentially a Chalcolithic pottery elsewhere for instance at Lothal or of Copper Age, for instance at Ahar) is found along with the remains of the Neolithic at a fairly early stage than at Hallur is evidenced at Benakanahalli trial digging. Therefore, on analogy, it could be conveniently postulated that the Chalcolithic stage in Malnad might have begun slightly earlier than at Hallur, say about 1600 B.C. up to 1000 B.C. Extensive digging of Benakanahalli site may throw more light on this problem.

With regard to the chronology of the Megalithic culture in the Malnad, in the habitation sites Black and Red ware and the All Black ware pottery are the only cultural materials noticed and these are comparable to similar pottery from the excavated sites at Hallur,

The latter group comprises of numerous types of burials. Of these, the Malnad port-holed chamber type on comparison to the Rajankolur type of North Karnataka may be dated to 800 B.C. to 600 B.C. while the multiple circle pit burials of Sompura may be dated to 800 B.C. to 200 B.C., if not earlier. However, these suggested dates for the Malnad Megalithic culture need verification through further explorations and systematic excavations of potential sites.

Therefore, on the whole, particularly in view of the occurrence of White painted Black and Red ware in an earlier context in the habitation on the one hand and in the burials at Komaranahalli on the other, the Megalithic culture in the Malnad may be dated 1200 B.C. to 200 B.C.