INTRODUCTION

Prehistoric Studies in South India

Since the nineteenth Century, some British officers such as Col. Meadows Taylor, Robert Bruce Fote, Mackenzie and others in the course of their official tours in villages, or for the study of rocks and minerals, etc., incidentally noticed many prehistoric sites in different parts of India. But it is only from 1947 onwards that systematic archaeological explorations were extensively carried out in different regions of the country including South India. These investigations established that the early man lived right from the Palaeolithic period in South India. The Karnataka region is extensively explored and many sites have been excavated on a small scale by various scholars and agencies. Consequently, we have a fairly good picture of the development of the prehistoric human culture from the earliest phase of the Stone Age Culture. Stalwarts like Mackenzie J.S.P. (1873), Bruce Fote (1916) etc. did the pioneering work in the field. It was Primrose who reported, for the first time in India in 1842, the presence of stone artifacts at Lingasagar in Raichur district (Allchin, F.R., 1960). But Robert Bruce Fote is the most outstanding. In
fact he was the first to discover a prolific Early Palaeolithic site at Pallavaram and subsequently in many other places. He published an excellent account of the prehistoric sites he noticed and therefore is rightly described as "Father of Indian Prehistory" (Sen, D. et al. 1956: p. IV). In Karnataka Khyād and Bhānak-Sirūr (Bruce Foote: p. 131), a rich Early Palaeolithic site, Sangamakallu (p.18), and T. Narasipura (p.69), extensive neolithic sites were reported by him.

The Faculty of Archaeological Work in the Bīdar Region of Karnataka

In spite of the work done by various scholars in Karnataka over a period of the last 100 years, some of the areas still remain unexplored and therefore there are gaps in our knowledge of our prehistory. There are sub-regional gaps also within the Karnataka region itself as regards the tracing of human culture in its different parts. Some river valleys although full of archaeological potential, are totally not surveyed. One such important but untapped river valley was the Māḷāra valley, a southerly tributary of the river Godāvari flowing through the Bīdar district in the state. Elsewhere in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh the same valley has revealed the existence of human culture.
from Middle Palaeolithic period (Badra, 1979: p.197). Equally important is the fact that it has yielded fauna of Pleistocene period (p.198), which greatly helps us in understanding the palaeo-ecological conditions during the period. But, the area of the river flowing in the Karnataka region was studied near Sangam (p.197). Since the river valley is sandwiched between the Godavari in the north and the Krishna in the south, and we have clear-cut evidence of contacts between protohistoric cultures of the two river valleys, the Mahra valley area must have played a major role in transmitting these cultural influences. The valley appears to have been rich in archaeological remains. In order to fill the long felt regional cultural gap between the Godavari and the Krishna, the area was selected for detailed study. The aim is to bring to light the various cultures that existed here from the earliest times and to assess the role played by the valley in transmitting the cultural influences.

In the historical period also the region played an important role. For instance, Kalyana, recently renamed as Basava Kalyana, was the principal capital of a major ruling dynasty i.e., the Later Chalukyas which exercised sway over a large part of the Deccan (presumably after 1044 A.D. (Gopal, N.R., 1981: p. 121)). The area therefore,
is known also for epigraphical records, temples, sculptures, forts, etc., especially of their regime. Similarly, at a later stage Bidar was the capital of the Barid Shahis (Yazdani, S.: 1947: p. 4). There are therefore, numerous Muslim monuments also in the region. But, the archaeological remains of the historical period have not been studied in detail, excepting some inscriptions and monuments. Hence, a programme entitled "Archaeology of Bidar district with special reference to the Mânjra and the Kâranja valleys" is taken up.

But the study is confined only to the valleys of the Mânjra and its main tributary, the Kâranja, with particular reference to pre-historical cultures and historical monuments, and sculptures and inscriptions up to the end of later Châlukya. It is exclusively based on the field data obtained from my village-to-village survey in the valleys.

**Previous Archaeological Work in Bidar Region**

Some antiquities of the region under study are referred to here and there in the *Karnataka State Gazetteer : Bidar District* (1977: pp. 22-23), and *Antiquarian Remains in Hyderabad State* (1953: p. 11) etc.
A few neolithic artefacts, flakes, cores etc., were found in the north-western end of the Bidar fort behind the tomb of Bibi Domagi and also near Chasmora, Papamah, Aliabad. Besides, some Cairn Circles of the iron age megalithic culture are noticed at Alwai about 6 1/2 km from Chillargi in Bidar district (p. 11). These notices were made some decades ago.

The finished and unfinished stone tools from the factory sites of Middle palaeolithic in the Mahjan valley near Sangam, in Bidar district have been noticed by BadSa^ (1979 : p. 197).

Remains of few monuments such as temples and sculptures of Harayanapur etc., are referred to by James Burgess in the Report on Antiquities in Bidar and Aurangabad Districts (1972 : pp. 39-41).

Numerous inscriptions of Bidar region were copied and studied by my friend late Sri Kulkarni, V.G. (1979) for Ph.D. dissertation. A few others were studied by Gopal, B.R. (1973-74) and Bhairaagi (1971 : pp. 39-42).
In addition to these investigations most of the monuments of the Muslim period of the region were studied by G. Yédüni (1947 : pp. 26-213). There are also some works covering the political history of the region partly based on the epigraphs, etc. The works of John Faithful Fleet (1896), H. K. Sherwani (1953), G. Yédüni (1950), P. B. Desai (1970) are some of the other examples in this respect.

The Gazetteer of Bidar District, published by the Government of Karnataka, contains a few illustrations of monuments such as ancient forts at Basavakalyana and Bidar, a temple at Jalasangri, some sculptures of Varaha, Ravana, Yaksha in Basavakalyana, a figure of a lady writing in Jalasangri, Humnabad taluk, Balamuri Gopura in Bhalkiprobably of c. 15-16th c. A.D. Some Muslim monuments and temples probably of the Muslim period (i.e. c. 14-16th c. A.D.) have also been illustrated there.

However, in most of these works the region is treated in a general way as a part of north Karnataka or the Deccan. And no attempt has been made to study systematically the culture of the region in detail. Especially, the pre-history of the region was a total blank.
The Present Work

It is against this background of the researches and publications on this important region that the area of the Manjra-Karanja, the only important river system in the region, is selected for intensive survey as mentioned above primarily to trace and study the pre and proto-historic remains in relation to that of the neighbouring regions and secondarily to study the temple architecture, iconography and inscriptions of the historical period. For, the latter aspect has not been studied in depth. With these problems in view a village-to-village survey of antiquarian remains was carried out in the valleys of the Manjra and Karanja covering 300 villages in adjacent taluka of Nādar, Shālki, Aurād, Basavakalyana and Hunsabād. Among these villages about 150 localities yielded variously Middle Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic (in Chalcolithic stage), Iron Age - Megalithic, Early Historic and late medieval remains, a few temples unfortunately in very bad state of preservation and sculptures and a few inscriptions.

It may be pointed out that a few fossilised hydrophyte species at Nāgūr-Babli in Aurād taluk, were
studied jointly by Dr. Manikkar and Dr. B. K. Wadager of the Geology Department, Karnataka University, Dharwad.

Besides, a part of the lower jaw probably that of an elephant and a piece of fossilized bone with cut mark at Jamalpur in Aurad taluk, two fossilized teeth of carnivorous animal at Kilar in Aurad taluk and the study have been made by Dr. K. R. Alar (Dharwad). These are included in this work under appendix. And the tools of Middle Palaeolithic and Mesolithic order are generally found in small numbers sometimes along with flakes, fragments, etc. Regarding the neolithic, it is for the first time that the neolithic habitation sites (along with other cultural remains) have been traced in Manjra and Karnaja valleys. But they are not as many as they are in the Krishna and Shilasa valleys. Similarly only in three localities did one or two pits contain megalithic pottery and iron objects. Since the surface features of the megalithic burials had disappeared in course of time it has not been possible to ascertain the probable number of megaliths that existed there. In a few other sites remains of pottery probably of megalithic fabric have been found along with other cultural debris. Unfortunately, the stone temples mostly of medieval period wherever they existed have fallen into ruins owing to political
invasions and have in course of time disappeared. In
the area surveyed, at only three places have either one
or more parts of temples, such as garbhagriha, antarala
and sabbhāmentapa. In the other localities, fragments
of pillars, doorjambs, ceiling slabs etc. are found
indicating the existence of temples there. While this
is the deplorable state of the temples fortunately to a
considerable extent, sculptures are found intact, and they
shed welcome light on the iconography of the period. In
about 15 localities, about 17 inscriptions were noticed
and copied by me. All are more or less intact. And
eleven inscriptions of the region were studied by
the materials noticed and collected, provide a reason-
able picture especially of the proto-historic cultures
and a fairly good idea of the medieval period.

Topography

Bidar district lies between Lat : 17°.30' -
18°.25'N and Long : 76°.42' - 77°.39' E. It is the
northern extremity of the Karnataka state. The
district comprises five taluks : Aurad, Bidar, Bhalki,
Hummadi and Basavakalyan. It is about 5,456 square
kilometers in area. It is surrounded by Gulbarga
district of Karnataka on the south, Mysuru and Moodabidri districts of Andhra Pradesh on the east, Nandguri and Osmanabad districts of Maharashtra on the north-west and north-east.

The district is located in a strategic position in between the two river valleys: the Godavari on the north and the Krishna on the south. Topographically speaking two well defined zones could be recognised: the southern and the northern.

The southern half of the district belt, more or less coterminous with the Bidar and Bhalki taluks, and parts of Hurnabad taluk, is characterised by high plateau sometimes the landscape suddenly ending into steep escarpment. The average elevation of the district is between 579.5 to 610 meters above the Mean Sea Level. The plateau in Bidar is the highest in altitude, rises near Qamskol, and irregular, oblong and about 35 km in length and 20 km in breadth at the maximum. The northern part of the region is a gently undulating tract occupied by Aurad taluk, characterised by the expanses of level, undulating elevated grounds, punctuated here and there; dry and scarce trees. The soil belt of the area is divided into two natural divisions, red soil and black
soil. Black soil proceeds from hard basaltic rocks.

Geology

Geologically the whole Manjra basin in the region is covered by trap formation. These traps have been subjected to continuous weathering activities and at places they are highly disintegrated, in some places it is almost like a suurrum type of collapsible nature of depth. The depth of weathering has gone up to few meters to 12 meters.

The rock comprises basaltic lava flows in the region. There is undulating terrace like feature in the topography of the region. It is altered to reddish vesicular laterite on the top layers in parts of Bidar, Humābad and Hasawakalyāṇa taluks.

The thickness of laterites ranges up to 30 meters. Generally the laterites are hard at the top and at depth are converted into clay. This clay is a leached product from the top layers of the laterite. They are highly porous common where the climate has both extremities, i.e., very cold in winter and very hot in summer.
The trap formation in the district is in the form of different flows of variable thickness at depth. The cross-section of the wells at different places revealed that the trap flows are also of aeolitic nature. Geolite is a name of one of the minerals.

The area of Aurād and Bhālki taluks comprises traps whereas Bīdar, Sumābāl, Sasanavāyana parts generally have laterite formations.

During my survey I noticed in the following villages, viz., Khami-Nahjol and Aurāl-Srikantamahelli (Bīdar taluk), Anubasongvi and Dogāpur (Bhālki taluk) and Santhpur, Mungālī, Kamālpur, Īsāmā and Handikeri (Aurād taluk), patches of fine grained silicious rock material such as chert and jasper etc.

Minerals

Minerals occurring in the region are few and not economically useful. They are bauxite, kaolin, red ocher and seolites.

The Deccan trap and laterite are the common rock materials for building purposes.
Drainage

The Manjra and the Kistna are the major rivers draining the district with numerous naals almost dry in summer. Among them some minor rivulets such as the Mullanari, the Chulki, the Nandmangal, the Naithura, the Munagall, the Gondhari are harnessed for irrigation purposes.

The Manjra

The Manjra or Manjra originates in the northern part of Belaghat plateau near Gaurwadi in Ahmednagar district in Maharashtra state at an altitude of 873 meters above the Mean Sea Level. The river flows about 167 km in Bidar district and occupies about 1969 sq. km and joins the river Godavari near Kodurthi in Bidar taluk, Nizamabad district in Andhra Pradesh. It enters the district near Tugaon (Halai) in Bhiitti taluk and leaves the region at Chilargi in Bidar taluk. The river basin covers parts of Bhiitti, Aurad and Bidar taluks. Physiologically the Manjra basin has an undulated topography i.e., almost a rolling type of terrain from north to south. The area has a general slope towards south-eastwards.
The Karanja

The Karanja or Saranja river, a tributary of the Manjra has a general flow from south-east to north-west direction and joins the Manjra near Narada-Sangam in Bhalki taluk. The river locally called Karanja takes its birth near Kohir village in Zahirabad taluk, Sangareddy district in Medhara Pradesh and enters the district from the south-eastern corner near Bhangoor (in Bidar taluk) and flows over a distance of 80 km in the district from the south-east to north-west through some of the villages of Bidar, Bhalki and Rummabadi taluks and joins near Narada-Sangam (in Bhalki taluk) the Manjra. Geologically, the Karanja basin comprises laterite formation. The river bed is actually formed of hard black trap.

The Manik nalä, the Chalki nalä, the Madhuram nalä, the Halliknäd nalä are the other tributaries of the river Karanja.

Other Naläs

In the south-western part of the district there are some naläs such as Mallanäri, the Goudhari and Senitore.
that join the river Krishna in the south.*

Climate, Rainfall and Vegetation

Geographically the district is an open area or Maiden. Climatically it is semi-arid, supporting tropical thorn and scrub vegetation.

The Maiden of the region consists of undulating, open terrain with an average rainfall of 907.7 mm (35.7") and receive about 81% rainfall annually from June to September. Owing to climatic variations and decrease of the rainfall every year the region is liable to come under drought. And in September usually the rainfall is the highest.

There is hardly any forest excepting acacia trees and some vegetation. The vegetation is of the typical thorn and scrub type, composed of species like Acacia Arabic (Jáli), Gardenia Gumifera (Bikki), Bissap (Bare) etc. Recently the Government has carried out

* Information about the river basins of Bidar district was orally given by Sri Shankar Bhat, Geologist, Government of Karnataka; Bidar: I am thankful to him for this service.
planted work in some parts of the region.

On the whole the climate is dry, extremely hot in the summer season and pleasant in the rainy season.

Ecological Conditions Bearing on the Pre-historic and Historical Cultures

Pre-historic Cultures

Rock materials suitable for making implements such as pebbles and field boulders, silicious rock materials like jasper, chert, etc., and the undulating fertile black cotton soil, the perennial water source of the rivers Hindgra and its tributary the Karanja were most hospitable and favourable both for the Middle-Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic-Neolithic economy. It is interesting to note that there are no significant hills. Also so far no granite has been traced. The neighbouring areas of Bidar region, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and southern Karnataka were also the most favourable as well as comfortable for the Pre-historic man as already known from the explorations and excavations. The orientation of the Hindgra river and its major tributary the Karanja, and its tributary, the Chulka nala, etc. as
well as the land terraces with black fertile soil had been most advantageous for the cultural movement of the pre-historic people in the region between the Gòdàvarti and the Krishna.

So far no Early Palaeolithic sites have been noticed in the region. But their presence cannot altogether be ruled out. But megalith of the type consisting of orthostatic tombs cannot be expected to have been constructed in the region, in view of the fact that no suitable stone slabs of granite or of sandstone or limestone are available for such activities.

That is why most of the pre-historic habitation are located on or near the banks of the rivulets of the Mahjar valley.

Historical Period

In the early centuries of the Christian era and also a little later, sculptors and architects of the Deccan were more adept in using limestone and sandstones of the sedimentary rock formation as abundantly illustrated by the sculptures and architectural remains at Amaravati, Nāgārjunakondā on the one hand and Bādānī, Aihole,
Sattadokallu on the other. Since the rocks of this kind are not available in the region, it explains the almost complete absence of stone monuments in the Satavahana and Western Chalukya periods. It is true that during these periods the region was not politically either important or active. That was another reason for such absence. From about the later part of the 9th century architects and sculptures became familiar in using trap and dolerite dykes for their creations. Thus ecological conditions coupled with the emergence of political and religious activities from about the 10th century A.D. onwards account for the occurrence of numerous temple remains and sculptures.