CHAPTER VI

ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE EARLY HISTORIC PERIOD
[C. 300 B.C. - A.D. 600]

The Black-and-Red Ware of the Chalcolithic age that continued till about the sixth century B.C. was followed by the early historic period of which the diagnostic ceramic is the Northern Black Polished (NBP) Ware that is known from different sites of the Ganga Valley to have continued till about the beginning of the first century B.C. In Bankura, the Northern Black Polished ware ushers in the early historic period. Although no written record of the Maurya period has yet been discovered in Bankura, Punch-marked and Cast coins datable to the same period have been found in large number in Bankura indicating its close contact with the Maurya empire. The cultural contact with Northern India is further attested by the discovery of specimens of terracotta figurines having affinity with the Maurya-Śuṅga idiom of art. The finds of the so-called Puri-Kushāṇa coins suggest probably the existence of a political authority, having affiliation with the Kushāṇa numismatic tradition, till the rise of the imperial Guptas to power. The Susunīā Rock Inscription of the C. 4th century A.D., belonging to the Viṣṇuīte ruler Chandravarman, lord of Pushkaraṇā, seems to suggest not only the rise of a state within Bankura but also its political and cultural contact with the Gupta empire. The spread of Aryan culture in Bankura is clearly attested by the allegiance of king Chandravarman to the Vaiṣṇava faith.

Archaeological study in Bankura has shown three major early historic sites, viz. Susunia hill, Pakhanna and Dihar,
Map showing the Major and Minor Early Historic sites mentioned in Chapter VI.
of which only the last one is excavated. Most of the antiquities have been found either by systematic exploration or by chance discovery. Besides, the three major sites, there are seventeen minor sites spread out throughout the length and breadth of the district of Bankura.

I. Major Sites:

A. **Susunia hill**: Lat.23°23'-23°24'15" Long.86°59'-87°0'10"
   P.S. Chhatna.

   The hill stands about 20 km north-west of Bankura town. The general features of the hill have already been introduced in Chapter I of the present work. The hill played an important role in the socio-economic life of the people of Bankura right from the emergence of prehistoric man. This is testified by the large collection of prehistoric antiquities from and around the hill.

   Besides its prehistoric antiquities, the hill has another principal claim to renown which is associated with the important rock inscription of the Gupta period. This remains as the only valuable epigraphic record of ancient Bengal as well as the only inscribed document of early historic period found so far from West Bengal.

   To approach the place, where the inscription is engraved in the Susunia hill, one can undertake from Bankura town the first part of the journey by bus up to the village of Susunia, lying just near the foot of the hill in its western side. The second part, a distance of nearly 3 km up to the rock cliff, has to be covered on foot. A narrow winding track runs along the northern slope of the hill through thick low forest.
The inscription is seen on the north wall of the open rock. The general appearance of the place is like a rock shelter which has an incipient overhanging roof. The parts of the roof probably have collapsed rendering the floor much uneven, laid with big blocks of strewn rock debris. The shelter is in an outcrop of rocks of Archaean series. The surrounding of it is rocky, rugged and forested. Neither there is any indication of settlements of the past around the place, nor there is any settlement of the present within a radius of 3 km. The nearest villages, Siulibana, Chandra etc. which are mainly populated by tribals, are about 3 km from this site. The local tribal people of Susunia, however, assemble at the place where the inscription is engraved to conduct their annual rituals. The antiquity of the practice may be worth-investigating to understand the background in which transition from tribal to civil society occurred.

The rock inscription is short in form and consists of only three lines engraved on the north wall of the hill. The inscribed lines occur below and beside the engraving of a 'wheel' (Chakra) surrounded by flames. It can be explained either as Viṣṇu Chakra (wheel of Viṣṇu) or 'Sūrya' (Sun) encompassed by rays of flames. There are a few indistinct alphabets around the 'Chakra' or wheel.

N.N. Vasu\(^1\) first published the inscription. Later, it was properly edited by H.P. Sastri\(^2\). The language of the inscription is Sanskrit and the characters are of the eastern variety of the Gupta Brahmi. It is dated in the C. 4th century A. D. on palaeographic grounds\(^3\). The inscription reads:

**Part I**

1. Pushkaraṇādhipatermamahārāja Śrī Simhavarmanah putrasya
2. Maharājā Śrī Chandravarmanah Kritiḥ!
Part II

1. Chakravāmīnah dasāgrenatisrishṭah

The meaning of the epigraph is: (This is) "the work of the great king illustrious Chandravarman, son of the great king illustrious Simhavarman, lord of Pushkaraṇā. (It is) dedicated by the chief of the servants of Lord of wheel".

It appears that Chandravarman and his father Simhavarman had their seat of authority in Pushkaraṇā, generally identified with the village of Pakhanna, about 30 km to the north-east of the Susunia hill. Chandravarman's devotion to Lord of Wheel or Viṣṇu is quite apparent. The advent of the Purānic Vaiṣṇava religion in the Damodar Valley by the middle of the fourth century A.D. seems to suggest the progress of Brāhmanical culture in the south-western part of Rādhā in course of the progress of Aryanisation in Bengal.

The record throws scanty light on the questions related to the rulers preceding Simhavarman or succeeding Chandravarman, the duration of the dynastic rule, if there was any, and the extent of the kingdom ruled over by them. It is, however, suggested that Chandravarna, one of the Āryāvarta-kings referred to in the Allahābād Praśasti of Harishena, who was defeated by Samudragupta is identified with Chandravarman of the Susuniā Rock Inscription.

B. Pakhanna: Lat. 23°24'45" Long. 87°22'30" P.S. Barjora.

The Damodar is a large river in the lower Gangetic delta as well as in Eastern India. Its valley is covered with large paddy-cultivating area in West Bengal. The modern village of Pakhanna is located just on the high south bank of the river Damodar. It is situated about 10 km
due east, as the crow flies from Barjora police station headquarter. The frequent bus services connect the village with the nearest railway station of Durgapur. One can easily reach the village from Durgapur by bus following the Durgapur-Vishnupur road via Hat Asuria, Pakhanna, Palashdanga, Rangamati and Sonamukhi.

The history of Pakhanna goes back to the remote past and appears to be connected with that of Pushkaraṇā, the capital city of Chandravarman. It has been suggested that the name Pakhanna is derived from 'Pushkaraṇā'. The name of Pushkaraṇā appears in the Susunīā Rock Inscription of Chandravarman dated C. 4th century A. D.

There is no systematic archaeological report on the site of Pakhanna, obviously due to the lack of any scientific fieldwork either in form of intensive field investigation or any kind of excavation. Right from the beginning of this century, investigators visited the site from time to time and collected a good number of antiquities. Those antiquities, no doubt, bear testimony to the archaeological potentiality of the site.

Probably K.N. Dikshit was the first scholar who published a short field note on the archaeological remains of Pakhanna. During exploration, he noticed ruins, mounds, large tanks, bricks and some other antiquities at the various places of the site. About the importance of the site, he observed: "it is still a considerably large village and its antiquity is attested by the fact that houses in several quarters of the village are built on the top of mounds formed by the ruined heaps of older habitations...In the western extremity of the village exists a large mound called "Rājgarh" strewn over with broken bricks, pottery pieces and other antiquities. Several
architectural stones are to be seen in the village..... There are several small tanks in the vicinity of a large tank (Pokhar or Pushkara) in the west of the village and the name Pokharana or Pushkaranā must doubtless be ultimately due to the presence of such a tank in ancient times":

Later, H.K. Mukhopadhyay and S.K. Chattopadhyay visited Pakhanna. They observed the archaeological potentiality of the site along with ancient remains including a collection of Maurya-Sunga terracotta art-objects, which were collected by them.

In 1960-61, under the auspices of the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta University, an investigation was carried out at the site and collection was made of punch-marked silver coins, copper cast coin, terracotta tablet and terracotta elephant cart-fragment of a fairly early period. Subsequently J. Birmingham of Sydney University and the Eastern circle of Archaeological survey of India undertook an exploration at the site. They picked up pottery pieces, consisting of a curved rim of a dish of Northern Black Polished ware, a stamped sherd representing the central part of a dish of polished black ware, a fragment of constricted stem of a vessel of red-slipped ware and grooved-footed shallow bowl or cup of black ware of sturdy fabric. Besides, a terracotta toy-cart, figure of a ram with stamped decoration of Kushāna style were also collected during this exploration.

Again, the Vangiya Sāhitya Parishad Museum, Vishnupur, has a small collection of potsherds, terracotta objects and cast copper coins — all those reported to be picked up from this site. In addition, a few other terracotta objects are preserved in the collection of a local library at Pakhanna itself. Apart from these, personal collections
of some enlightened villagers having some antiquities deserve notice.

The present investigator explored along the river cliff of the Damodar which is still scattered with occupational debris even after random erosion caused by repeated flood of the river. Our survey included the area around the perimeter of the high village settlement areas, isolated by low mounds intervened by comparatively low ground, old and new tanks, covering the entire northern part of the village which is close to the river. The mounds bear local names such as Sātbār, Garherdāng or Rājārgarh, Etepāṛā etc. The southern part of the village has the modern settlements and commercial places which nearly stand over the old occupational area.

The major part of the present field-investigation at the site was devoted to the area, locally known as Sātbār. The place is also known as the burning ghat and the ferry-ghat. The study of the cliff section of the river at Satbar is still in a very preliminary stage. Emphasis has been laid on the occupational deposit exposed by the river. Documentation of the collected evidence along with their possible stratigraphical position available in the river cliff section deserve consideration.

**Tentative stratigraphy observed on the river cliff at Sātbār (Pakhanna):**

The river cliff section along with the south bank of the river between the burning ghat-ferry-ghat and a rain gulley coming down to the river from the village is covered by thick occupational debris or remains capped and sealed with thick river silt and sand. This stretches over an area of about 5000 feet in the east-west direction. The
cliff section which was observed during the present investigation is not uniform at all places, but it was noticed that the different layers of occupation-deposit, exposed in the section, more or less maintain a uniform character. On the other hand, the un-uniformity can be explained as the result of the movement of the river as well as the degradation and aggradation of river deposit on its bank.

Four different layers observed in the cliff section, from the surface down to the bottom, are as follows:

Layer I. It is a sandy and silty deposit. The silty layer is almost thin when compared to general silt deposition on the river bank. It is hardly exceeding 41 cm - 45 cm in thickness. The deposit is free from occupational remains.

Layer II. There is a sandy and greyish soil deposit mixed with burnt and unburnt chunks of earth apparently of mud floor, traceable at places. Potsherds in the form of potters' debris and the mouth level of a ringwell, visible in fragments may be traced in some places. The deposit varies in thickness between 31 cm - 40 cm.

Layer III. It is about 1.45 cm - 1.85 cm thick deposit of light grey coloured soil mixed with ashy material. A huge number of early historic pot sherds, some occupational debris and other specimens comprising beads, earthen objects etc. were found at this level.

Layer IV. This is the thickest layer observed at the cliff section. It is apparently occupation-debris and is dark greyish in colour measuring 1.65 cm - 2 m. The deposit is composed of a thick accumulation of ashes and charcoal along with traces of burnt clay and greyish loose sandy soil, mixed with a profusion of potsherds and other antiquities.
The frequency of potsherds is so great in a few cells that the accumulation appears as a dump of mixed occupational debris. Its thickness is also very great, indicating an unusually long period of occupation. The dump-like character of the accumulation, which is clearly visible in exposed cliff section, appears to be suggested also by the formation of irregular sub-layers of the accumulation with clear traces of slopes and pits which, however, could result from caving in due to the pressure of the heavier top deposits resting on this soft and loose debris accumulation. However, the deposit contains different varieties of early historic potsherds including a few rare pieces of NBP ware sherds and some other valuable early antiquities. At a few places, the deposit has gone down under river water level.

The different sections give the general idea of habitational deposit of the site including the soil character, indicating nature of occupational debris, and other kinds of cultural remains. One may find out in the site, with its stratigraphical situation related to the cultural sequence, the total character of an early historic settlement-site of ancient Bengal as well as of the district of Bankura. The in situ finds which the site yielded from its cliff section constitute a small collection of artifacts consisting mainly of the potsherds, a few beads of stone and terracotta, a few pieces of clay objects, terracotta ring well in fragmented forms, a big earthen jar in fragments, traces of apparently habitational floors, oven, furnaces etc. and a few other artifacts. But the quantity of in situ objects is not much in comparison to the total collection made from the site. On the other hand, a few sherds of NBP and a broken terracotta figurine of Sunga variety are the only datable specimens found in situ from the cliff section.
Apart from the in situ objects, the river bed, the erosional rain gullies of the river bank, the bank of ponds in nearby river side, pits dug out for foundation of modern houses, are also scattered with large quantity of potsherds, fragments of ring wells, occupational remains and other kinds of cultural objects. They are found totally in a mixed up context. To pick up antiquity from these kinds of ruins would be very much risky and unscientific method of collection. However, the remains which generally occur on the surface are also apparently of value for the understanding of early historic and late historic period and the quantity of occurrences in different clusters is also the indicator of the potentiality of the site as a centre of early historic period, where the settlement started roughly around the third-fourth century B.C. Other parts of the district of Bankura were, during this period, hardly influenced by any such evidences indicating the emergence of a civil society. The food gathering and hunting economy is testified by a large number of sites located in the southern and western part of Bankura, which yielded iron slags, microliths and other variety of specimens. Early historic period was ushered in Pakhanna earlier than other regions of the district.

Etepārā: In the north-eastern part of the village there is a locality, known as Etepara, inhabited mainly by lower caste Bauris. The modern houses of this area are constructed mainly on the old ruins. The remains are traceable at places in the form of brick fragments, potsherds and other old occupational debris. Ancient remains are gradually being less traceable due to the expansion of modern settlements along with agrarian economy. Although at Etepara there is no relevant datable record which is assignable to the early historic period, the occurrence of bricks and
some forms of old structures may apparently be of early mediaeval, even mediaeval period.

Garherdāng or Rājārgarh: The place called Garherdāng or Rājārgarh has been noticed by K.N. Dikshit. But at present the remains of this place are nearly obliterated. The new tanks, houses, pits for keeping cowdung, bamboo trees and other newly grown habitational areas have almost enveloped the entire part containing ancient remains. The general appearance of the raised area, however, is definitely indicative of some early settlement.

A tentative Chronology of Pakhanna:

Pakhanna is the only site in West Bengal which can be related to Pushkarana of King Chandravarman of the Gupta period on the basis of the Susuniā rock inscription. No systematic excavation has yet been conducted at the site. Inspite of the erosion caused by the Damodar, the present author could discover an eroded section of the site in the cliff on the south bank of the river. This provided a very helpful clue in reconstructing a cultural sequence and its tentative chronology.

The investigation of the cliff section revealed that the site was first occupied in the early historic period. The long span of occupation at the site can be interpreted in the light of the lowest deposit or the layer IV. The deposit contains a few NBP sherds, black polished sherds, greyware, red ware in different varieties, a few stamped potsherds and other habitational ruins. On the basis of the potsherds of the NBP variety, the deposit may be tentatively dated in the Maurya-Śuṅga period.
Collection has been made of unstratified but datable antiquities like punch-marked coins, cast copper coins, terracotta objects having Mauryan and Sunga affinities from the site. Apparently, these may be related to the lowest level of the site. Because, at most sites coins first appear in deposits which also yielded NBP ware dated to C.600 - 100 B.C.\textsuperscript{15}

The next, above the lowest, is the layer III which is characterised by black slipped ware, red ware in profuse quantity, a few large colossal type of jars, that might have been used for storage purposes, and the habitational ruins in the form of debris, furnaces, ovens etc. For this layer we have no datable object, but the continuation of black slipped ware and other early historic potteries has been encountered. A good number of red wares of early historic period have apparently shown the existence of occupational remains probable of the Gupta period. The deposit is not as thick as the earlier one and the materials found from this deposit are also limited. But it is equally possible that due to the limited nature of our field investigation we might not get more material for the period concerned. On the other hand, the profuse quantity of potsherds, a few large storage jars, habitation debris etc. in the cliff section indicate the richness of the deposit which might have been under occupation during the Gupta period, when the site was raised to the status of a capital city of Rādhā country, named as Pushkaraṇā. It is true that the existing remains are not adequate enough to show an overall character relating to the status of culture of the people during Chandravarman's time. A detailed study of the site with a large scale excavation is the desideratum.
Below the top silty soil deposit on the bank, there is a smaller deposit containing red, grey and other types of pottery, ringwells, burnt mud floors etc. By the nature of antiquities we can presume that the deposit is to be related to early mediaeval or mediaeval period. In this context, it is worth-noting that the village has also yielded a few sculptural objects in the form of images of gods and goddesses, structural remains which will be considered later. The recorded specimens belong to the C.11th-12th century A.D.

To sum up, the chronological significance of the site as well as its other importance in respect of the cultural and political history of Bankura on the basis of collected data, it can be assumed that the place was a major cultural centre in the early historic period. It has been aptly suggested by D. C. Sircar\(^{16}\) that the southern part of Rādha or Suhma was Aryanised earlier than the northern part of the Janapada.

C. Dihar: Lat.23°07'15" Long.87°21'30" P.S. Vishnupur.

It has already been discussed that the site of Dihar produced a good collection of stray neoliths and a well-defined phase yielding the cultural materials assigned to the Chalcolithic black-and-red ware stage. The site has also yielded numerous antiquities of the early historic period both by explorations on the surface and by the excavation, carried out by Department of Archaeology, Calcutta University. The major collection of the early historic antiquities is so huge that it requires a volume to accommodate a detailed discussion on them. The major bulk of the early historic material have been collected from the surface by M. L. Singha. This collection is now housed in the Vangīya Sāhitya Pariṣad Museum, Vishnupur. Besides, in course of our field
investigation we picked up from the site some objects of early historic antiquity.

The excavation carried on by the Department of Archaeology, Calcutta University, at the site has revealed the early historic level of occupation that is preceded by the Chalcolithic phase. The excavation report, an abstract which has recently been published, includes the description of the important artifacts along with the stratigraphy of the site. It is not difficult to ascertain the richness of the site even from this brief report.

The total digging at the site reached down to an average depth of 2 metres below the surface to reveal two distinct cultural periods, viz. Chalcolithic (Period I) and Early Historic (Period II). The latter period which was declared as early historic witnessed the introduction of iron and was well-marked by the ceramics of early historic time and other associated antiquities. In general, the ceramics comprise Śuṅga and Kushāṇa bowls and other types of potsherds of the same period. But the NBP ware is conspicuous by its absence in this phase. The other significant excavated remains are a large number of cast copper coins, stone beads and terracotta objects. The report states that the occupational deposits of the early historic phase extended from the layers I to IV.

II. Minor sites yielding early historic finds:

We have come across some other important discoveries of early historic specimens comprising the ruins of old occupational deposits, potsherds, coins, and traces of old brick structures apparently of Gupta-Post Gupta period. The
antiquities have come to light either by field investigation or by chance discovery made by the local people.

A. The Kumari-Kansavati Valley

Some field investigators explored the area around the Kansavati-Kumari confluence and picked up potsherds, coins, etc. whereas a substantial quantity of early mediaeval and mediaeval sculptures have been discovered from this area in course of the investigation undertaken by the present author.


It has already been discussed that the phase I and II of the site of Tulsipur produced the evidence of iron along with Chalcolithic black-and-red ware and other antiquities. The excavation report of the site also states that a phase consisting of only 50 cm thick occupational deposit, designated as phase III, could be identified as overlying the two black-and-red ware - iron phases. Although the excavators have not assigned this phase to any specific period, the presence of red ware and the general study of excavated and explored materials apparently suggests that the site had been occupied also during the early historic period although for a relatively short duration. The lack of substantial data might make it difficult to demonstrate an early historic identity for this phase, but the continued occupation of the site following the two iron-bearing phases may be taken to assume that the site was inhabited from the iron age to late period. It may be further recalled in this connection that the site yielded materials of lesser variety indicating basically a rural character. Therefore, the probability of the existence of a settlement based on rural economy during early historic times in the valley of the
Kansavati including Tulsipur may not be ruled out. The ceramics of the early historic phase, terracotta beads, and net-sinker etc. constitute the main collection of the early historic phase from Tulsipur.

2. **Ambikanagar**: Lat. 22°56'15" Long. 86°46'15" P.S. Ranibandh.

The site has already been introduced in the chapters of prehistory. The historic materials from the site were reported by V. D. Krishnaswami. He records the potsherds collected from the site. He has not, however, specified whether the sherds belong to the early historic phase. The site was also visited by the present author. The investigation resulted in the discovery of early mediaeval remains only.

3. **Paresnath**: Lat. 22°57'30" Long. 86°45' P.S. Ranibandh.

The site has yielded mainly microliths. Some potsherds of the historic period have been traced at the site by Krishnaswami. A further visit for the present study hardly yielded any antiquity of the early historic period from around the site.

4. **Chiada/Navachiada**: Lat. 22°56'50" Long. 86°44'45" P.S. Ranibandh.

Besides the collection of microliths, which have already been discussed, the explorations of Mrs. D. Mitra resulted in the discovery of some Puri-Kusha coins from the site.
5. **Sarengarh**: Lat. 22°58' Long. 86°44'15" P.S. Ranibandh.

The site is now submerged by the Kansavati water reservoir. For the early historic period, some Puri-Kushāṇa coins have been found from the site. The coins are now housed in the Vaṅgiya Sāhitya Parisad Museum, Vishnupur.²²

6. **Tilabani**: Lat. 22°47'30" Long. 86°40'30" P.S. Ranibandh.

M. L. Singha²³ reported the discovery of some Puri-Kushāṇa coins from the site. The specimens are now in the Sāhitya Parisad Museum, Vishnupur.

7. **Rautara**: Lat. 22°49'55" Long. 86°40'30" P.S. Ranibandh.

Some Puri-Kushāṇa coins²⁴ have been reported to be found from the site. The Sāhitya Parisad Museum has some of the specimens collected from the site.

B. The Damodar Valley:

1. **Saragdihi**: Lat. 23°32' Long. 87°15' P.S. Majhia.

Besides the black-and-red and other Chalcolithic ceramics found during the present exploration, some early historic potsherds have also been picked up from the surface. The discovery of such specimens, although in a scattered manner, indicates the trace of an early historic occupation at the site.

The Silavati Valley:

1. **Govindapur**: Lat. 23°4'50" Long. 86°55' P.S. Indpur.

The site is already introduced in the chapter dealing with microliths. From a place near the locality, a hoard
of silver Punch-marked coins was discovered. The cultivators found it at the time of ploughing. But most of the coins are now untraceable. Only three specimens are available at the disposal of a local man.


The site yielded microliths. Besides, a Puri-Kushāna coin was picked from the river bank, near the village.

3. Silavati Water Reservoir/Kadamdeuli: Lat.23°5'10"
   Long. 86°52' P.S. Indpur.

There is a collection of microliths found at the site. Some Puri-Kushāna coins were unearthed during the construction of the reservoir.

4. Brahmandiha: Lat.23°02'15" Long.87°59' P.S. Taldangra.

The site yielded a collection of a few Puri-Kushāna coins recovered from a pond, during the operation of a relief work carried out at a pond.

5. Harmasra: Lat.23°01'45" Long.87°0'30" P.S. Taldangra.

The site is rich with mediaeval temple and sculptural remains of the C.11th-12th century A.D. There is also a report of Puri-Kushāna coins having been found during the excavation of a local tank. The coins remain preserved in Bankura District Treasury25.

6. Sulgi: Lat.23°02' Long.86°58'40" P.S. Taldangra

Besides neoliths, microliths and historic specimens, the site yielded a hoard of Puri-Kushāna coins. J. N. Bandyopadhyay26, the then District Information Officer of
Bankura, reported a collection of 18 such coins which are now in his personal collection.

Besides the above minor sites, Thakurpur, Gahirhati (both are near the site of Dihar), Junbediya, Bandeuli (the sites on the bank of Silavati in P.S. Indpur) and Thumkara (P.S. Gangajalghati) have yielded some brick structural ruins.

Analysis of the data recorded from the early historic sites of Bankura:

In all, three major and nineteen minor early historic sites have been discovered so far in the entire district of Bankura. Notwithstanding the nature of the sites or the method of collection of the antiquities, an appraisal of the early historic period in Bankura is possible only when a systematic analysis of the antiquities having bearing upon the cultural history is undertaken.

Ceramic Industry:

The ceramics constitute the largest part of the collection of early historic materials, produced by three sites of the district viz. Pakhanna, Dihar and Saragdihi. The collection of ceramics consist of only potsherds. These are all fragmentary and hardly single whole vessel was found. A few miniature pots in the collection of Pakhanna and Dihar are the only exception.

The huge collection of ceramics recovered from the sites widely vary in colour, shape and design. Beside some rare specimens of NBP Ware which have been examined separately, we may classify the rest of the sherds into different groups, according to their colour: red, black, grey and buff. Each of these groups is further divided into sub-groups based on
the fineness or the coarseness of the clay or paste. The buff pottery is represented by only one sherd which is of fine texture with a smooth surface and was collected from Dihar.

I. Northern Black Polished Ware (NBP):

The pottery was first recognized by Sir John Marshall when he excavated the famous early historic site of Bhita. Thereafter almost every famous early historic site in the Gangetic Valley including Chandraketugarh, Tamluk etc. in West Bengal has yielded NBP in profuse quantity. It is a very fine black lustrous ware widely studied by scholars. In a recent study, a chronological framework of the ceramic industry has been ascertained: "the general stratigraphical testimony places the early phase of NBP from Circa 600 B.C. to Circa 300 B.C. and the late phase of NBP from Circa 300 B.C. to the beginning of the Christian era". However, besides the collection of J. Birmingham and others, the present exploration at Pakhanna resulted in the discovery of only six small pieces of a fine quality NBP sherds. Due to the lack of rim portion, the shape of the sherds is unknown. These have a hard and fine body fabric with thin section. The sherds have a glossy surface with highly lustrous shine and it is difficult to scratch their surface with a nail or knife. These pieces, when struck, give a sharp metallic sound. Apart from this doubtless best quality of NBP, the site of Pakhanna also produced some sherds which are apparently of the coarse variety of NBP. These sherds are thicker in section, having dark unoxidized smoky core and relatively low-fired. In one case the surface colour of the potsherd is not lustrous black, instead it is black. It is difficult to distinguish these sherds from the black-slipped ware. The shape of this coarse or degenerated quality of NBP is
externally grooved in curved bowl. All the sherds of NBP were prepared with fast moving wheel.

II. Red Ware:

II.1 Plain coarse red ware: This type of pottery was found in a good number from all the three major sites. The ware is terracotta red on the outer surface and brownish red on the inner surface. It is probably unslipped. The surface is spotted with tiny white dots due to the mica particles which are used in the clay as a tempering agency. The clay is rough mixed with silica particles. The thickness of this ware is variable, some medium and some thick, measuring 7 cm - 2 cm thick, and there can be no doubt that this is primarily because these are hand-mould pottery. The outer surface is smoothened, probably with wet hand. In some cases, it appears to have been polished. The inner surface is always left untreated. Several types of rim occur in this ceramic group, viz. a flaring rim, a horizontally everted rim and a flaring rim with a slight depression at the edge (IL. 25).

II.2 Slipped fine red ware: It is also found in large quantity at Dihar and Pakhanna. The ware is either brick-red throughout or red on both the surfaces and carries a greyish core. Some sherds show patches of grey on the outer surface as well. The red colour is presumably produced by firing under oxidizing conditions and it varies from yellowish to blood red. The grey colour of the core is due to incomplete firing. The clay of this ware appears to be well-prepared, as the fabric is fine and homogeneous. The thickness of the ware appears to vary with the type of clay chosen. These are 3 cm to 9 cm in thickness. Most of the sherds show evidences of hand-modelling and these are some which are wheel-made. The outer surface is always smooth and the
smoothness gives them an appearance of wheel-technique. Some sherds are smoothed with wet hand, some polished and some red-slipped and polished. The colour of the slip is either orange-red or red. The shapes of this type are bowl, jar, large and small vessel, and several other forms of pots (IL.26&27).

II.3 Cord-marked coarse red ware: This ware was found also in a good quantity at the sites of Pakhanna, Dihar and Saragdihi. The ware is generally dull red. It is almost always unslipped. In one or two cases a red slip seems to have been used but the traces are so slight that they are almost negligible. The clay of this ware is not well-prepared. It is rough, coarse and unevenly mixed. The thickness of the sherds varies between 3 cm to 1.3 cm. This ware is undoubtedly hand-modelled. The vessels of this ware are generally decorated with cord-marked designs, which may have covered the whole body except the rim and the neck. The shapes of this ware are of different types. The rims are either straight or flaring or straight but standing at an obtuse angle to the wall of the body (IL.28).

II.4. Stamped red ware: This type of pottery was found at Pakhanna and Dihar in small number. The ware is generally red but sherds of buff colour sometimes occur. The range of colour is apparently due to variations in the firing. The clay is not very well-prepared. Most of these sherds show medium thickness ranging between 7 cm - 9 cm. The vessels are crudely built and the firing is very uneven. The pottery of this type is evidently hand-modelled. The ware is decorated with irregular stamped patterns. The stamping occurs in different shapes. The shapes of the ware are mainly small and medium shaped vessels.
II.5 **Incised red ware:** A few sherds of this type have been found at Dihar. The ware is generally light brick-red in colour, but it may range from ochre to black, according to the conditions of firing. The clay seems to be similar to that of fine red ware and stamped red ware. The thickness of the sherds is medium and the thinnest of all measures .4 cm. The surface is smoothed by rubbing. Decoration occurs on the shoulder of the vessel and is of two kinds: (i) an incised one which is composed of lines running around the vessel horizontally, with diagonal short straight lines arranged parallel to one another; (2) other incised design of a band made of criss-cross thin lines.

III. **Black-slipped ware:**

This is by far the most important and basic representative pottery of the site of Pakhanna as well as Dihar. This coloured pottery, occurring in the form of sherds, small and large, was found at the lowest and the next higher deposits of the site of Pakhanna along with the NBP. The ware is black in colour. On the surface all black sherds look alike, but if the paste or slip is carefully examined, a slight difference in the colour of the slip may be observed. This fine black ware is black not only on the surface but also throughout the slip unlike other black pottery of the site. Moreover the sherds are relatively thin and have a rather smooth surface. The slip is very well prepared. The sherds of this ware all thin measuring 1 cm to 1.2 cm in rim-part and .2 - .6 cm in the part of body. Horizontal parallel striae are observable and these suggest that the wheel-technique had reached a very high stage of development. The surface of this ware is very highly burnished, though only a few of the sherds still remain the original glossy surface,
which are almost identical to the NBP ware. The common shapes of this ware are dishes, basins and bowls. The bowls have incurved rims and have angular shallow shapes. The dishes and basins are more or less similar in shapes. They have straight rim or slightly incurved and more or less flat bases. Besides there are a few pieces of sherds in black colour having plain surface without the use of any slip. They are coarse in fabric. The surface of the sherd seems to be not well-smoothed. But evenness of the wall and neatness of the horizontal groove over the inner surface suggest wheel-technique (IL.24).

It is worth noting that there are a few sherds of this variety having unslipped or partly slipped surface. But they are well-burnished and well-fired. The site of Dihar yields relatively good number of sherds of this type whereas Pakhanna has a few specimens of it only.

IV. Grey ware:

IV.1 Slipped fine grey ware: There are a good number of sherds belonging to this type collected from all the three sites. The surface is generally grey in colour which is of the light tone commonly known as silver grey. There is almost no difference between the colour of the surface and that of the paste, which is soft, fine and even throughout. The thickness of the sherds varies between .4 cm to 1.1 cm. On the whole, the thickness of this ware is medium. This ware is generally wheel-made but those moulded with the hands are also common. The surface of the pottery is usually smoothed and this was probably done on the wheel as parallel striae can be found on the rim. The sherds suggest a good variety of shapes of vessels. Some small vessels appear to be bowls with a base, having a medium carination.
IV.2 Cord-marked fine grey ware: This type of pottery is not large in number. The grey colour of the surface is light in tone and the clay is fine and soft. The thickness varies between .5 cm - .8 cm. The ware is generally wheel-made, except one specimen which is probably made by hand-modelled technique. The cord-marks generally occur on the lower part of the body.

Besides the above analysis on collected ceramics of the early historic sites of the district, there are a few other types of ceramics collected from Pakhanna and Dihar. They are not many in number. However, they require some description because of their speciality.

From the site of Pakhanna and Dihar a few gritty red slip potsherds have been picked up. The sherds are bigger in size and they tend to be buff coloured, with a markedly gritty texture. These are well fired and are hard. The common shape is large jars, and these are often decorated with incised chevrons, relief band etc.

From Pakhanna there are some other low-fired red slipped potsherds recovered which in some cases are without slip. The fabric is common to other types of red slipped wares. The shapes are small and medium straight-sided bowls with flattened upright rims, small-sized upright with flat base (modern shape of this type is called Koopta).

From the site of Pakhanna and Dihar there are some other types of large storage-jars of dull red unslipped ware found in the form of broken sherds. But these are always found in the upper deposit. At the site of Pakhanna we have an in situ collection of such pottery. Although we are not sure about its actual position, these are interesting
specimens of ceramic variety of the district of Bankura. It may be noted that from all the three sites of the district a huge amount of potsherds have been noticed on the upper surface of the sites. They are, no doubt, late period potsherds and can be assigned to early mediaeval-mediaeval period.

To sum up, the following are technological features of the ceramic industry that flourished in early historic Bankura:

1. The wares have been prepared by fast-moving wheel and side by side hand-modelling technique.

2. The shapes which the sites produce are mostly functional for domestic purpose. Therefore, we may assume that the pottery was the main domestic item for day-to-day living.

3. Besides a few NBP sherds of Pakhanna and a good number of sherds of black-slipped, red-slipped and silver-grey wares from Pakhanna and Dihar the major number of sherds are in common fabric and texture. Sophistication of ceramic industry might not have been much in use by the people who settled in early historic time in Bankura.

4. Raw material used for the manufacturing of ceramic was local, although varied. The clay for most of the ceramics were well-prepared. The slip was also of good quality.

5. The general appearance of the ceramics shows enough similarities with those of other early historic potsherds collected from other early historic sites of West Bengal viz. Chandraketugarh, Bangarh, Tamluk etc. The similarities are noticeable in respect of shapes and fabrication. Therefore, we can assume that the early historic ceramic,
yielded from Pakhanna, Dihar and Saragdihi shows common trend provided by all early historic sites of the Gangetic delta as well as ancient Bengal. This is characterised by the absence of a deluxe pottery in the main and table-wares in general.

**Coins:**

At the dawn of human civilization, the value of an object or article was generally measured in terms of commodities. In this practice of barter system, a produce at the primary level was recognised as the valued commodity and the medium of exchange. From the early historic period the money-economy came into vogue and a metallic piece, of copper, silver or gold, known as coin came to be used as the medium of exchange. The money-economy obviously presupposes an advanced form of society and the authority, often political, who was responsible for the circulation of coins.

From the district of Bankura, there are at least ten sites from where early coins have been discovered so far. The coins which are assignable to early historic period, are silver punch-marked coin, cast copper coin and Puri-Kushāna coin. Besides the coins unearthed during excavation at Dihar, most of the coins have been traced on the site-surface and some have been found by chance discovery.

As it has been pointed out above, the sites from which the early coins were found are Pakhanna, Dihar, Govindapur, Chiada, Sarengarh, Tilabani, Rautara, Brahmandiha, Harmasra and Sulgi.

**Punch-marked silver coins:**

The collection of this category of coins is not very large in number. These were unearthed from the sites of
Pakhanna, Govindapur and Jiorda. From Govindapur, a hoard of silver coins of Punch-marked variety was found. But the hoard reached the hands of a local merchant who, as would be expected, did not preserve it. At present some of these have been traced at the disposal of a local man. The Jiorda collection of this type of coins is also untraceable, except two pieces kept in one of the villagers' house. From the site of Pakhanna a few such coins have been collected from time to time. The Asutosh Museum\(^3\) has acquired two of these varieties of coins from the site. Besides, there is a collection of similar type of coins in the Vangiya Sāhitya Pariṣad Museum, Vishnupur.

The general study of the Punch-marked silver coins shows that these are the product of two distinct processes.

(i) Firstly, the coins were made by cut-sheet process. The method of preparation of this type of coin involves the beating of the metal first into a flat sheet of necessary thickness. Then the sheet was cut into strips of varying breadth which depends in proportion to the thickness of the sheet. Finally, the blank piece of approximately desired weight was cut; and then for adjustment of the weight, edge of the blank was clipped. On the blank the symbols were punched.

(ii) Secondly, the process was to take metal equal in weight to that of an individual coin and melt it separately and then pour it out on the earthen or wooden board to cool and take its shape. And then it was pressed to have a flat surface, if necessary. It seems that the symbols were punched in this method, when the metal was still soft.
The symbols of this coin variety consist of the solar symbol, six-armed symbol with three arrows and three ovals alternately placed, standing bull and standing elephant.

Regarding the date of this coin variety, the usually accepted theory is that those were first put in circulation during the Nanda-Maurya period\textsuperscript{31}. The coins, however, remained the currency for a long time till about the 4th century A.D. within a larger area. This type of coins has been found from a good number of sites in Bihar, West Bengal and Orissa, besides other parts of India.

**Cast copper coins:**

This variety of coins is known from the sites of Dihar and Pakhanna. The excavation at Dihar has revealed a good number of cast copper coins from the early historic level that is, Period II. The collection in the Vañgiya Sāhitya Parisād Museum, Vishnupur, possesses large number of such coins. M.L. Singha himself has also picked up many of these coins from the surface and rain gullies of Dihar.

The coins are casts from moulds. On the basis of the shapes, this type of coins can be divided into two categories:

(I) The square or rectangular having symbols on each side. The usual symbols are (a) Tree-in-railing; (b) Three-arched hill with crescent; (c) Hollow-headed standard; and (d) Taurus on one side and (a) Triangle-headed standard (b) Svastika (c) Taurine and (d) Elephant on the other. Besides these symbols there are some other indistinct symbols also recorded on both sides of same coins.
II. The other category is circular or semi circular in shape. The symbols occurring in this category are also more or less the same.

These types of coins were known from many sites in north India. The early historic sites of West Bengal have also produced large number of such coins. Regarding the date of the coins, there still remains an uncertainty. It has been suggested generally that the C. third-second century B.C. is the date of the these coins. Accepted theory is that they remained current till the second-third century A.D.

Puri - Kushāṇa Coins:

The coins made of copper are found quite frequently in the Chatonagpur plateau area. This nomenclature of the coin suggests that the coins originated from Puri in Orissa and were issued as regular currency. But the name was given to the coins for the simple reason that they were discovered for the first time in Puri. The coins appeared to be a very crude imitations of the coins of the Kanishka, the Kushāṇa ruler. The origin of the coins in Puri is by no means certain. However, quite a large number of these coins have also been discovered from other parts of Orissa as well.

In the district of Bankura a good number of Puri - Kushāṇa coins have been reported from time to time. They are either picked up as casual find from old ruins or unearthed as a chance discovery during the digging of tanks, roads etc. It is interesting to note that the localities
from there the coins have been found belonging to the southern part of the district which is geographically nearer to the Orissa border. According to the recorded find-spots along with their mutual distance from which the collection of the coins has been made, the coins may be grouped thus:

(i) Those found in the area in the vicinity of the Kumari-Kansavati confluence;

(ii) those found in Brahmandiha-Harmasra area and

(iii) those found in the area around the Silvati water reservoir near Kadamdeuli.

Group I: To this group belong four findspots or sites yielding Pūrī - Kushāṇa coins viz: Chiada, Rautara, Tilabani, Sarengarh. Besides the collection of D. Mitra who picked up such coins from the locality of Chiada, all are now housed in the Sāhītya Pariṣad Museum, Vishnupur.

Group II: To this group belong three find-spots or sites, viz. Brahmandiha, Harmasra, and Sulgi. Most of these coins have been collected from Sulgi. It has already been stated in the site report that J.N. Bandyopadhyay collected a hoard of Pūrī - Kushana Coins from this area. The other sites produced a number of Pūrī - Kushāṇa Coins.

Group III: In this group may be included three find spots, viz. the Silavati water reservoir near Kadamdeuli, Jiora and Govindapur. A small number of coins have been traced from these sites. All the coins have been unearthed either during the construction of water reservoir or land-filling on the bank of the Silavati.
Besides, there are some other localities which have also produced Puri-Kushāṇa coins. But most of the collected coins are not traceable. A few of them are at the disposal of the Panchmura college library (P.S. Taldangra).

The Puri-Kushāṇa Coins preserved in the Vaṅgiya Sahitya Pariṣad Museum have been studied by G.P. Sen. He classified the coins in four different varieties. These are as follows:

Variety I: Made of Copper; Weight measures 82 grams; round in shape. The depiction on both sides **Obverse**: Standing image (of a male), right hand raised above, left hand extended to front, wearing trouser and pointed shoe. **Reverse**: Standing image wearing trouser and shoe, right hand raised above, left hand vaguely represented, on left shoulder half-circle marks.

Variety II: Made of Copper; Weight measures 60 grams, round in shape. The depictions of both sides are same as variety I.

Variety III: It is same as other above varieties in form, metal and depiction but only difference is in weight which is 45 grams.

Variety IV: It is small round shape coin weighing only 7 grams. The depiction on the coins of the variety is only visible on the **obverse**: Standing image (Probably of a male) holding a weapon in right hand.

Besides the Museum collection, the present study also includes a general observation on other Puri-Kushāṇa Coins preserved in different private collections. It appears
from the study of the coins that they were issued in three or four denominations. The coin of higher denomination is known from Jiorda weighing about 95 grams, while the lower denomination is the same as variety IV of the Museum collection weighing only 7 grams. The depictions on most of the coins are faint. The visible part shows a standing figure on both the sides very much alike only with the arms in varying position.

Regarding the circulation of such coins in the district, we can assume that the coinage travelled across the border of Orissa in early times and might have spread to Bankura through Singbhum (Bihar) and Midnapur (West Bengal). It is known that these coins were found in Rakha hills of Singbhum in 1917 and again in 1953. The location of Rakha which is nearer to Ghatstila, on the bank of the Suvarana-rekha, indicates the maximum proximity to Midnapur around Silda, the bordering region of Bankura.

The devices on the Purī-Kushāṇa coins, no doubt, indicate their affinity to the later Kushāṇa coinage. The so-called Purī-Kushāṇa coins may be called also Kushāṇa imitation coins. It seems that so long as some petty semi-independent chiefs ruled in parts of eastern India comprising Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, owing allegiance to the imperial authority of the Kushāṇas, they made use of these so-called imitation Kushāṇa coins till about the end of the third century A.D. Further, it has been suggested that the Murundas 35 ruled in the lower Ganga Valley in the C. second-third centuries A.D. They might choose to make use of the imitation Kushāṇa coins to facilitate trade and commerce in their jurisdiction. As the imperial Kushāṇa
coinage were in circulation throughout the length and breadth of northern India for centuries, the ruling chiefs in parts of eastern India could not but continue to imitate those coins even after the decline of the Kushāṇa power. The coins were, however, comparatively debased as the technique of manufacturing suffered decline due to the non-availability of technicians who had been so long employed in different Kushāṇa mints. There are also other probabilities. Firstly, the mercantile community devised the currency in imitation of the Kushana coinage during the period of political turmoil following the downfall of the Kushāṇa imperial authority. Secondly, the temple-authorities had the coins manufactured for making payment to the employees of the temples. No firm conclusion regarding the authorship of the coins can be arrived at in the present state of our knowledge. Whatever that might be when the imperial Guptas rose to power and put in circulation their own coins of various types and metals, there was no longer any necessity of continuing the use of the imitation Kushāṇa coins. As a result, the large numbers of such coins that had been so long in circulation were melted down or hoarded.

So far as Bankura is concerned, we may not overlook the concentration of the imitation Kushāṇa coins in the areas nearer to the Orissan border. It is not unlikely that the people of Orissa who had migrated to different parts of Rāḍha including Bankura might have brought with them the house-hold wealth in the form of hoard of Puri-Kushāṇa or imitation Kushāṇa coins. It is, however, difficult to ascertain with accuracy the circumstances in which the migration of the Orissan people to Rāḍha occurred. The Dākshinātya Brāhmmins had probably come from Orissa sometime
in the post-Gupta period, if not earlier. It might be in the time of Śaśāṇka whose Gauḍa kingdom included the northern part of Orissa. The hoards of Puri-Kushāṇa or imitation Kushāṇa coins discovered in Bankura should be historically associated with the pre-Gupta period, but their findspots might have some ethnographic explanations and, therefore, might be dated to the post-Gupta period.

Terracottas:

The sites of the Gangetic delta are rich with the early historic terracotta objects. In fact, the maximum number of early historic sites of ancient Bengal have been dated mainly on stylistic considerations of the terracotta art-specimens. The sites of Pakhanna and Dihar in the district produced a good number of terracotta objects. Out of the two sites, the maximum number of terracotta specimens were found at Pakhanna. The collection was made by either experts or lay individuals. The stray finds of terracottas were from the pits or the erosional banks of the Damodar and the Dwarakeswar. The stratigraphical position or the field-note regarding the objects are not available. Most of these terracotta objects are now preserved in different collections of the Asutosh Museum of Indianart, Calcutta University, State Archaeological Gallery, Government of West Bengal, Vahgiya Sāhitya Parisad Museum, Vishnupur and Pakhanna village Library.

Terracottas discovered so far may be divided into three major types:

1. Terracotta figurines, human and animal,
2. Terracotta tablet, and

3. Miscellaneous including beads, toys, net-sinkers, dabber, and other indistinct objects.

1. Terracotta human and animal figurines:

Regarding the terracotta human figurines, the Pakhanna specimens have received relatively more attention from scholars. The early specimen which has been dated by experts to pre-Mauryan period is a broken lower part of terracotta mother-goddess collected from Pakhanna by the State Directorate of Archaeology, Government of West Bengal. The fragment of mother-goddess is shown with slayed hips similar to those of the pre-Mauryan style and occurs with specimens of protohistoric black-and-red ware.

The Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta University, has a beautiful specimen of a female figurine from Pakhanna. This has been identified as Apsarā or Yakshinī belonging to the Maurya-Śuṅga period. Biswas gives a short description of the specimen. He calls it 'the lady with a bird'. It is produced from a mould and is in low relief. She is found to hold a pet Śuka or parrot in her left hand and, with her heavy dress and ornaments, elegantly stands with a queenly glamour and a seductive grace. It measures 14.3 cm in height. Kramrisch observed that it has enough similarity with the Mauryan female figurines of Tamluk in style and technique. On the other hand, Ray believes that the specimen, "exhibits definite Śuṅga characteristics so familiar to us from the Bhārhūṭ railings. With its lower part broken, it represents a standing female figure (6") perhaps a Yakshinī, with a head-dress fashioned exactly on
the Bhārhūt model. Her right hand lifts a portion of the skirt in an angle, and the left, resting in akimbo, holds a Śuka bird. Her heavy neck-ornament, arranged in two stages and composed in heavy square units modelled as if in separate plastic volumes, her rounded and stiff pair of breasts similarly modelled and arrangement of the folds and hangings of the upper and lower garments, all unmistakably reveal her intimate relationship with the Śuṅga idiom of art."

Biswa has argued that as the specimen has not yet attained the two dimensional volume of the succeeding age, this clay sculpture should be considered a product of the transitional style of the Maurya and Śuṅga epoch. Saraswati has subscribed to the view. He states that the terracotta female figurine resembles the Tamluk specimen in technique, style as well as in form, though lacking in its finish, perhaps due to an extreme weathering. The technique also seems to be of inferior quality and can be dated to the Maurya period.

During the present investigation, another terracotta female figurine has been acquired from a villager of Pakhanna. It is also a broken piece of terracotta object which shows an upper part of the figurine. This female figurine has only the facial part, measuring only 5.5 cm x 4.2 cm. It exhibits enough similarity in form with the specimen referred to above. It appears to be corroded and of inferior quality of workmanship. On stylistic ground, however, it would not be unreasonable to assume that the specimen belonged to the Maurya-Śuṅga period.

Besides, there are a few other human and animal figurines collected from the sites of Pakhanna and Dihar.
The Dihar specimens are relatively inferior in quality to those of Pakhanna. But the animal figurines of Dihar show high standard of artistic quality in comparison with all the animal figurines collected from different early historic sites of West Bengal. The figurines depict ram, elephant and other undetermined animals.

2. Terracotta Tablet:

The Asutosh Museum has a single collection of terracotta tablet discovered from Pakhanna. The specimen shows a pair of bulls (?) supporting an emblem in the centre. Two similar specimens collected from Dihar are at present in the collection of the Sāhitya Parisad Museum, Vishnupur. There are also information provided by local man regarding the discovery of other terracotta tablets from Pakhanna and Dihar. One may speculate about the use of terracotta objects in family, social and religious life of the people. Artists, no doubt, put in their talent and labour for the production of the art objects at the demands of the society. Otherwise, the class of artisans and artists would not function and flourish living upon their occupation.

3. Miscellaneous Terracotta Objects:

The sites of Pakhanna, Dihar and Saragdihi yielded a good number of different types of objects, viz. nit-sinker, beads, toy-carts, ram with stamped decoration of Kushāṇa style, dabbers, balls and some other indistinct objects. The Asutosh Museum has a fragment of elephant toy-cart acquired from Pakhanna. Another piece of elephant toy-cart has been
collected by J. Birmingham\textsuperscript{45}. There are some game-objects collected both from Pakhanna and Dihar and those are now preserved in the Sāhitya Pariṣad Museum, Vishnupur. The net-sinkers and beads are of usual shape having narrow perforations. But both types are easily identifiable. A few pieces of terracotta beads have also been found and those seem to be of inferior quality so far as their clay and firing are concerned. They are ill-fired and are prepared of coarse sandy type of clay.

Besides, Pakhanna and Dihar also yielded pottery stands, lumps and some other terracotta objects. It is worth noting that the site of Pakhanna yielded relatively more miscellaneous items from the river cliff section. The upper deposition which is apparently of late period also yielded many specimens. Therefore, to assign them to the early historic period only would be unreasonable.

**Stone Objects:**

**Beads:** So far as stone-beads collected from the early historic sites of Bankura are concerned, Dihar yielded a major part of the total collection. M.L. Singha\textsuperscript{46} has collected a huge quantity of stone beads during his explorations at Dihar. The beads are now housed in the Sāhitya Pariṣad Museum. These are all made of semi-precious stones. Foremost among them are carnelian, agate, crystal, chalcedony, jasper, granet, amethyst, opal, blue felspar, marble and other types of stones. The beads are generally circular, hexagonal, flat hexagonal, cylindrical and barrel, flattened leech type, barrel triangular, and of a few other shapes.
Besides Dihar's material, the collection of stone beads also includes some pieces from Pakhanna and Saragdihi.

**Other Stone Objects:** Apart from the above stone beads, the early historic sites of Bankura have other kinds of stone-objects. From Dihar and Pakhanna a few broken pieces of stone utensils have been collected and preserved either in the Sahitya Parisad Museum or at the disposal of private individuals.

A stone sculpture recovered from Pakhanna is now in the collection of the Asutosh Museum. It is a miniature stone image of Simhavāhinī (Durgā) collected during the early decade of the present century. Stella Kramrisch and Ramaprasad Chanda have dated the specimen to the Gupta period. But S.K. Saraswati opined that the image in question is too hopelessly mutilated to yield any definite basis for ascertaining its date or its artistic merit.

Besides the above major cultural objects of the early historic period, the two early historic sites of Pakhanna and Dihar have also yielded some other items in small quantity which are in all respects the important remains of early historic Bankura.

**Bone and Ivory Objects:**

These are found only from the site of Dihar. But the difficulty lies in the fact that all these objects of bone and ivory are mixed with other earlier cultural materials like Chalcolithic black-and-red ware. The specimens were picked up from the surface and hence, it is difficult to assign them to any specific stratigraphic context. A few
ornaments of bone and ivory among these are believed to be belonging to the early historic period. The identified ornaments are bangles, earrings, neck-laces, pendants, hairpins and some other undetermined objects of personal adornment.

**Metal Objects:**

A copper antimony rod collected by the villagers is the only copper specimen. The specimen was found at Pakhanna and is now preserved in the collection of the Pakhanna village Library. Besides, some other metal objects in the form of iron implements were collected from the sites of Dihar, Pakhanna, Saragdihi and Sulgi. But the date of these antiquities remains uncertain and it is difficult to treat them as early historic specimens without any shade of doubt. The objects are, however, highly corroded.

**Ring Wells:**

Along the exposed river bank of Pakhanna, at least three half broken ringwells have come to our notice during the present field investigation. Regarding the stratigraphic position of these ringwells, we have doubts. In site report it has been pointed out that the mouth or the top of the ringwells lies just below the upper silt which is clearly visible in the cliff section. Therefore, it may be assumed that the deposit in which the mouth of the ringwell occurs is of late period, mediaeval or late mediaeval time. If our assumption stands correct, these ring wells can hardly be assigned to the early historic period, although it remains true that most of the famous early historic sites of the Gangetic valley such as Hastināpur, Rājghat,
Bangarh⁵⁰, Tamluk⁵¹, etc. have yielded a good number of ringwells which are assignable to the early historic period.

However, the terracotta ringwells observed at Pakhanna are lined with earthen rings to certain depth below which the pit narrowed and was left unlined in two cases. The other one has earthen rings placed throughout their depth. It is doubtful whether those had been used as irrigation wells or as draw-wells for domestic purpose. Again, those might have been used for sanitary purpose as well. The paucity of details have, however, made it difficult to arrive at any definite conclusion.

From any of the early historic sites of Bankura, the structural remains either in brick or unburnt mud have not yet been encountered, although except Dihar, the other sites remain totally unexcavated. So far as the structural remains are concerned, one can trace their existence at the exposed river cliff of Pakhanna. There are a few ovens or furnaces noticeable partly in ruined condition from the exposed river cliff. However, from the point of view of structural remains of the early historic period, Bankura has not yet produced substantial evidence.

Apart from the above remains, some brick-structures assignable to the Gupta or post-Gupta period are reported from the five sites (Thakurpur, Gahirhati, Junbediya, Bandeuli and Thumkara) of Bankura. But it is difficult to determine their exact date, although the structures contain the bricks of the Gupta style. But a style may continue to the later period also. Scholars have tentatively dated such structures on the basis of the shape and technique
of the bricks used for them. The discovery of some other remains of the Gupta period which are associated with the brick-structures might confirm the view about dating.

Cultural development in the early historic period:

Pakhanna was the earliest cultural and political centre in Bankura. Dihar also flourished simultaneously. While at Pakhanna all the archaeological material of the early historic period — Northern Black Polished ware and other associated potsherds, punch-marked and cast copper coins, terracotta objects of the Maurya-Śuṅga affiliation etc. — have been found, the Northern Black Polished Ware is conspicuous by its absence at Dihar that yielded iron, the Śuṅga-Kusāṇa bowls and other types of potsherds of the same period, cast copper coins, stone beads and terracotta objects. These archaeological finds are comparable to those discovered at Mahāsthānagāra, Bāngarh, Tāmralipta (Tamluk) and Chandraketugarh. It would not be unreasonable to hold that in the map of urban centres of Bengal in the early historical period one may safely include Pakhanna (Puskaraṇa) side by side with Mahāsthānagāra, Bāngarh, Tāmralipta and Chandraketugarh. The traits and character of these urban centres are coeval with similar early historic sites of north and mid-India. It would not be, therefore, unreasonable to suggest that in the early historic period there occurred definitely a cultural expansion from the north to the east.

The expansion of the Maurya-Śuṅga-Kusāṇa culture in Bankura is quite evident from the discovery of the diagnostic ceramics, terracotta objects, punch-marked, cast and so-
called Puri-Kushāṇa copper coins. The thrust of urbanisation was absorbed in some centres like Pakhanna and Dihar, while other parts in Bankura were not yet in a position to shed off tribal social ideology. It appears that the process of cultural expansion that had its beginning about the 6th-5th century B.C. was complete by C. 4th century A.D. The circulation of coins indicates the transition of the economy from the subsistence to the surplus level and the beginning of the exchange of commodities on a wide scale. The settlements of the mercantile communities flourished as centres of trade and commerce. The consolidation of a political apparatus through the institution of kingship is indicated by the Susuniā Rock Inscription of Mahārāja Chandravarman, a devotee of the "Lord of Wheel" or Viṣṇu. The structural remains discovered so far at five sites in Bankura show bricks of the Gupta style.
REFERENCES


4. Sircar, D. C. (1942) op. cit.


7. Vasu, N. N. (1303 BS) op. cit., p. 268; (1895) op. cit.


9. Ibid.


11. IAR (1960-61), p. 70.


14. Besides his individual field investigation at the site in 1981, exploration was undertaken in 1982 (February) by the present author jointly with Dr. Dilip K. Chakrabarti on behalf of Archaeology and Museum Unit, Department of History, Delhi University.


20. Ibid.


27. AR-ASI (1911-12), pp. 29-94.

30. **IAR** (1960-61) p. 70.
32. *Ibid*, p. LXXVII.
43. IAR (1960-61) p. 70.
44. Ibid.
45. IAR (1965-66) p. 57.
46. Singha, M. L. (1384 BS) op. cit.