Chapter VI

Investigations by Other Agencies
INVESTIGATIONS BY OTHER AGENCIES

Introduction:

The Narmada Valley as one of the important centers of Archeological remains in India has been subjected to investigation by various scholars from the middle of the last centuries and even continues till recent years. However a major portion of Central Narmada Valley comprising the districts of West Nimar (now Khargone and Barwani), East Nimar (now Khandwa) and Dhar of Madhya Pradesh which is known as Nimar area has somehow been left out of thorough investigation. In fact this Nimar region was focused by the archaeologists only when the mega hydel and irrigation projects were envisaged on River Narmada. As a part of salvage archaeological operation of the submergence area of two mega dam projects namely Narmada Sagar Project (NSP) and Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) were subjected to somewhat detail investigation by various government agencies. In fact in view of this impending destruction of archaeological sites, it was essential to study this part of Central Narmada Valley in details for the posterity.

Previous Research:

So far two major attempts have been made to study the archaeological sites of this area. The first one is the excavations at Maheswar and Navdatoli which was carried out more than five decades back by (Sankalia et al. 1958, 1971). The second attempt deals with the prehistory and geomorphology of the area (Mishra 1985) and suggests that the region is highly potential in respect of various archaeological evidences. This study is only confined to description of tool assemblage and their stratigraphical affiliations and formulation of a relative chronological framework. Further it is mentioned here that before undertaking this present investigation there was only one limited nature of exploratory work carried out in this area by. Krishna (1984).
Other Investigations Contemporary to Present Study:

Besides the present investigations, there were other agencies were also involved in investigating the area through limited explorations and trial excavations of certain selected sites. Of these the Excavation Branch at Nagpur, Archaeological survey of India carried out exploration (IAR , Nath 2007 ) in the east Nimar district as part of salvage operation in the submergence area of Narmada Sagar Dam Project. Following that very limited excavations were carried out at two late Historical sites namely Saraswati Kunda and Harsud Garhi, both located in Harsud tehsil of district East Nimar. Besides, two temple sites were also taken up for excavation in Khandwa tehsil of district East Nimar. Subsequently, a Chalcolithic site named Chichili in Kasrawad tehsil, district Khargone (West Nimar) was also taken up for excavation by the Excavation Branch of Archaeological Survey of India, Nagpur.

The State Department of Archaeology, Government of Madhya Pradesh carried out trial diggings at several sites from Chalcolithic to historical and medieval sites in the submergence area of both the dam projects i.e. NSP and SSP confining to the area coming within Madhya Pradesh. As part of this salvage operation Government of Madhya Pradesh has carried out trial diggings at Chhalpakala and Khedinema both in Khandwa (East Nimar) and Hoshangabad districts respectively coming under the submergence area NSP. Besides, Maruchichli in district Barwani, Brahmangaon in Khargone district, and Karondiya, Ekalbara, Kalyanpura, Pagara, Khalghat, Katnera and Kavathi in district Dhar were taken up for excavation that have been described below.

EXCAVATED SITES

Karondia, Dhar District:

Excavation (Mishra et. al. 2007: 259-62) has been carried out at Karondia (22° 4' N; 74° 49' E) a Chalcolithic site in district Dhar as part of salvage operation within the submergence area of Sardar Sarovar Dam project.

A 5m x 5m grid over the site was laid which revealed the outline of several pits and post holes. Totally nineteen pit outlines were found from which seven were excavated
which yielded pottery, bones and charcoal. The excavation at some of the pits yielded the pottery of Chalcolithic period and the late early historic period. The interesting find noticed in the excavation is that pottery from all these 7 pits varies in their style considerably. The pottery includes red ware, burnished red ware, black and white ware. But the pottery has not any resemblance to the Malwa pottery reported from Navdatoli.

Two trenches were also taken up in the gullied alluvium on the east of the site. These trenches show Chalcolithic rubble platforms within the alluvium, which has been gullied after the Chalcolithic period. This indicates a widespread phase of Narmada aggradations during the Chalcolithic period. The features of the site also shows that Chalcolithic people did not select badland areas rather occupied the bank of the Narmada within the area affected by floods for their settlements.

Brahmangaon, Khargone District:

The village Brahmangaon, tehsil Thikri is located 5 km to the north of village Dabana on Indore-Barwani highway and the site lies one kilometer north of the present village settlement on the bank of Narmada. The archaeological mound covers an area of about 9000 sq. metres and rises up to 15 ft from the surrounding ground level. The preliminary survey at the site has revealed the evidence of painted black and red ware, Kayatha ware, red incised ware, lustrous red ware and corrugated grey ware. The potteries are both with geometrical and non geometrical designs.

The site was excavated (Gargav 2007: 277-78) as part of salvage archaeological operation in the submergence area of Sardar Sarovar Dam. Two trial trenches were undertaken at the site to ascertain the nature and cultural succession at the site. Trial Trench I was undertaken on south eastern slope of the mound. It was noticed that out of 1.10 m deep, 15 cm layer was cultivated land soil with some pot sherds; rest deep portion yielded no pottery. As this part of mound once was used for cultivation, it was extremely difficult to determine the stratigraphy. Hence the north western portion of the slope was chosen for trial Trench II. Here also first 15 cm only revealed traces of cultivated soil along with most of the antiquities and potsherd. From these two excavations pot sherds of black and red ware and black on red ware, some fine microliths comprising blade, core, chips, lunates etc
were found. However, the excavation at the mound of the site apparently witnesses the activities of Chalcolithic culture, but was badly disturbed due to cultivation.

**Ekalbara, Dhar District:**

The site (22° 16’ 30” N; 75° 0’ 22” E) is situated on the right bank of river Narmada, 22 km from tehsil headquarter Manawar in the southern direction, and 50 km from the district headquarter, Dhar. This Chalcolithic site excavation (Mathur and Mathur 2007:255-58) has yielded six cultural periods that was taken up as part of salvage operation in SSP submergence area.

Period-I (Chalcolithic) is characterized by black on red ware, microliths, core, stone ball and terracotta ornaments like bead and bangles. Period-II (Mouryan) has yielded the evidence of ivory mother goddess, terracotta figurines of bull, and iron implements along with some NBPW sherds. Period-III has yielded thin gold bead and some incised pottery along with a few fragmentary shell or glass bangles. Period-IV has yielded precious stone ornaments and variety of terracotta animal figurines was found. Period-V has yielded ceramic types of Mediaeval period. Period-VI is of Muslim/Maratha period that has yielded ceramics in addition to structures, terracotta candle stand, bead, cowries and Mughal coins.

**Kalyanpura, District Dhar:**

The site at village Kalyanpura lies at a distance of 4 km from Bankaner on Manawar-Dhamnod road and two kilometers from Thangaon to Amlatha. This site is located just in the middle of two tributaries of Narmada i.e. Man and Mandawati and was taken up for excavation (Mishra and Maheshwari 2007: 263-64) under salvage operation of SSP submergence area.

This historical mound roughly measures 190 x 165 meters with a total cultural deposit of about three meters containing remains from pre-Mauryan, Mauryan, Sunga, Satavahana and Gupta divisible to four cultural periods. The important antiquities that have been recovered from the site comprise sherds of NBPW, incense bottle, beads of semi-precious stones, crucibles for copper and iron smelting, iron slag, terracotta beads and
balls, skin rubber, shell bangles, antimony rod etc. Besides, evidence of house, floor, and hearth with kitchen material have also been encountered. The most noteworthy evidence that has come is the huge number of conch pieces with bangles that indicates the site being a factory site for manufacturing such bangles.

**Pagara, District Dhar:**

Village Pagara (22° 14’ : 75° 18”) lies about 10 kilometers northwest of Dharmapuri in Manawar tahsil of district Dhar. The headquarters of District Dhar is about northeast of this village. This site was brought to light in 1981 when a hoard of coins containing nine Gupta gold and 39 Kshatrapa silver coins were found.

Two small scale excavations (Krishna 2007: 265-68) at this site has brought to light five periods viz. Period-I Sunga and Satavahana, Period-II Kshatrapa and Kushana, Period-III Gupta, Period-IV Parmara and Period-V Medieval. This excavation has yielded a varieties of terracotta objects comprising hook-like objects, fragments of discs, toys, human and animal figurines, wheels, stoppers, moulds and other objects.

**Khalghat, District Dhar:**

The mound at village Khalghat lies on the southern bank of Narmada about 10 km east of tehsil headquarter Dharampuri in district Dhar. This site was taken up for excavation as part of salvage operation in the submergence area of SSP.

The excavation (Chandrol 2007: 269-70) has yielded two fold cultural sequences. Period-I (Pre-Mauryan): The antiquities recovered from this period include stone balls, shell bangles, terracotta discs etc. The ceramic industry includes black and red ware, red ware and black slipped ware. Period-II (Maurya and Sunga): The pottery of this period includes red ware, red slipped ware, black slipped ware, grey ware and micaceous ware.

**Katanera, Dhar District:**

Katanera, was an ancient town which was a centre of trade and commerce during the time of Mouryas to Kshatrapas. The ancient site at village Katanera lies on the left bank of Baghini river near the confluence with river Uri, about 2 km north of Nisarpur and 11 km
east of Kukshi town in district Dhar. The mound extends over 400 meters parallel to Baghini River with a cultural deposit of about seven meters. This site was taken up for excavation (Chandrol 2007: 271-75 and Chandrol 2007) as part of salvage operation in Sardar Sarovar Dam submergence area. Excavation has yielded a fivefold cultural sequence at the site.

**Period – I Chalcolithic (Malwa Ware 1600 to 1000 BC)**

The Chalcolithic period has one meter thick cultural deposit that has yielded Malwa culture mixed with Ahar culture. Main ceramics of this phase are white painted black and red ware of various types, black painted on red ware (Malwa Ware). The associate wares are red slipped ware, grey ware, black slipped ware, incised red ware and simple red ware with microliths and stone beads. Black painted on red ware found from Katanera is in coarse and medium fabric, having design of criss-cross, three zig-zag horizontal lines, mat designs, ladder designs, simple horizontal lines etc. The excavator thinks that river Baghini and Uri were the main sources of transport to connect it with other important sites. During chalcolithic period Katanera might have been connected with other Chalcolithic sites like Pipri, Utawad, Chikalda, Kawati, Bhavagaon, Gopalpura, Brahmangaon and Mahishmati.

**Period - II Early Historic Period (600 to 100 BC)**

There is a gap between the Chalcolithic period and Early Historic period. Period - II is subdivided into two phases: A and B on the basis of ceramics and other remains.

**Period-IIA Pre-Mauryan (600 - 300 BC)**

Phase A revealed black and red ware, black slipped ware, red slipped ware, chocolate colour red ware, lustrous red ware, micaceous red ware with iron clamps, terracotta and stone beads.

**Period-IIB Maurya-Sunga Period (300-100 B.C)**

In this phase all ceramics of earlier phase continues, but black burnished, red polished and thick fabric of black and red ware were also found in this phase. Chocolate red ware and lustrous red ware had disappeared. The most notable findings of this phase are ring wells, floor with post holes and house remains.

**Period – III Saka Kshtrapa Period. (1st cent. BC to 4th cent. AD)**

A notable evidence of historical evidence that was noticed in this phase was an attack of political rivals and the whole habitation was burnt. This incident probably took
place in 3rd - 4th century AD. The remains of burnt habitation were noticed at the entire habitational deposits. The evidence of mud houses, ring well, bamboo poles with support of bamboo material were noticed in this phase. This evidence is very well comparable with the evidence from Khaparkhera.

Period – IV Early Medieval Period (9th -14th century AD)
Medieval ceramics, burnt brick bats and other antiquities were found in this period.

Period - V Late Medieval or Modern Period (16th -19th century AD)
This phase belongs to Mughal-Maratha (1600 to 1800 AD) period. Copper coins of Muslim period were noticed from the surface and sculpture of terracotta elephant head belonging to 18th century AD was encountered in the excavation.

Kavathi, District Dhar:
The site is situated on the right bank of Narmada at a distance of 23 km from Manavar Tehsil headquarter in district Dhar. Limited excavations (Mishra and Pradhan 2007: 301-02) were carried out with five trenches as part of salvage operation in the submergence area of SSP.

Period - I Chalcolithic: It yielded antiquarian remains like microliths made of chalcedony comprising cores, unfinished tools, blade, lunate, borer etc. Painted pottery comprises designs like hanging loops, parallel lines etc. Some sherds of black on red ware and are with paintings in white and black have also been collected. Besides evidence of houses have also been traced with post holes arranged in rectangular and circular forms.

Period – II Early Historic: Due to the disturbed nature of the site, regular deposit of the habitation belonging to this period could not be traced. However the antiquities recovered from the excavation include terracotta and stone beads, shell bangles, terracotta objects, toys, ball etc.

Period – III Early Mediaeval Period: The Paramara sculptures, architectural fragments, a modern temple built out of old architectural remains were found. Besides a large number of shell and glass bangles have been found.

Maruchichli, District Barwani:
The site on the left bank of River Narmada lies at village Maruchichli at a distance of 9 km from Dawana (Dhamnod-Barwani Road) in district Barwani. This excavation was taken up as part of salvage operation of the submergence area of SSP.
The excavation (Mishra and Pradhan 2007: 302-03) at this site has given the evidence of six cultural periods. Period-I Mediaeval remains of Sati stone, Period-II Historic period temple remains of the Paramara times. Period-III Gupta period pottery, terracotta, earlobes, beads, figurine of mother goddess, stopper, shell bangle fragments etc were found. Period-IV Sunga period Janapadiya coins, pottery and other related antiquities, black and red ware etc. Period-V Mouryan period with NBPW, red slipped ware, black and red ware, shell bangles, terracotta figurines etc were found. Period-VI Chalcolithic period with pottery and microliths:

**Chhalpakala, District Khandwa:**

This site at village Chhalpakala in district Khandwa is situated at a distance of 3 km from Singaji Samadhi Sthala. It was excavated as part of salvage archaeological operation of the submergence area of NSP. The excavation (Mishra and Pradhan 2007: 303-04) has yielded four fold cultural sequence viz. Period-I Mauryan Period, Period-II Sunga-Satavahana Period, Period-III Gupta-Kshatrapa Period and Period-IV Mughal-Maratha period.

Among the findings it included Copper antimony rod, iron arrowhead, terracotta skin rubber, stone and terracotta balls, earlobes, iron nail etc have been the important finds. Some inscribed potsherds have also been found. The Sunga-Satavahana remains are in the form of burnt mud floors with post-holes.

**Khedinema, District Hoshangabad:**

The site (22° 26' N : 77° 1' E) lies at a distance of 24 km to the southeast of Harda on the left bank of Narmada in district Hoshangabad. The excavation (Maheshwari 2007: 339-343) and at this site was taken up as part of salvage archaeological investigation in the Narmada Sagar Dam Project. It has yielded fourfold cultural sequence divisible into four periods.

**Period – I (Malwa Culture)**

The major find include three pottery types. (A) painted pottery which includes plain black-on-red ware, red ware ochre painting, coarse, plain red ware, black and red ware, (B) without any painting and (C) blotchy grey ware. The design element on pottery is very limited. Besides simple lines, wavy lines, geometric patterns such as diamonds in rows,
concentric circles and loops, red painting, generally inside and outside horizontal and vertical bands are most common.

No copper tool as reported from other Chalcolithic sites of Central India has been found at Khedinema. The people of this culture also used a specialized blade industry. The material used for blade industry is mostly chalcedony, but occasionally chert and carnelian are also used. It has yielded steatite and bone beads. Bone collection of this period indicates domestication of animals. Terracotta figures and copper objects which are most common in Malwa culture are completely absent here. There is no stratigraphic evidence of sudden end of Malwa culture. However the occurrence of a sterile layer of black cotton soil in between Malwa cultural phase and succeeding early historic period suggests that the site was deserted subsequent to the Chalcolithic cultural phase at the site.

Period – II (Early Historic Culture)

This period is characterized by the occurrence of NBP ware, black and red and plain grey wares. The iron objects in this period which includes both agricultural and non-agricultural implements establish the nature of economy during the period. Another feature of this period is copper objects like chisel, fishhooks, finger rings, antimony rods, carpenter tools etc. The majority of bone pieces belong to domestic animals of this period. It indicates that animal husbandry formed part of the subsistence economy. Beads of different material were available in plenty that includes terracotta, glass, carnelian, bone, shell, gold coated glass of various shapes. Besides, copper punch marked coins have also been recovered.

Period – III (Historic)

This period is ascribed to Sunga-Kushana and Gupta period. The period is characterized by distinct ceramic industries like black and red ware, red ware and red slipped ware. Of these the red ware is most predominant. The other antiquities of this period include terracotta human figures, toys, lamps, earlobes, skin rubbers, glass and lacquer bangles, dabbers, iron nails, knives, agate, carnelian and crystal beads etc. The antiquities of Gupta period are very limited.

Period – IV (Medieval)

This period is marked by presence of medieval pottery which has predominance of coarse grey ware. Eighteen copper coins were also recovered which are inscribed and in a good state of preservation.
Chandel, District East Nimar:

This historical temple site at village Chandel (22° 12' N; 76° 27' E) lies in Khandwa taluk of district East Nimar. Excavation (IAR 1987-88, Nath 2007: 287-91) at this site was carried out as part of salvage archaeological investigation in the submergence area of Narmada Sagar Dam Project. This temple facing west is dedicated to one of the Saptamatrika-Chamunda. On stylistic grounds the temple may be assigned to 10th -11th century AD. Besides the temple remains, pottery recovered from the site include both red ware and dark grey ware. Antiquities in terracotta include a toy-cart wheel, two smoking pipes and some beads. Among metal objects, iron in the form of nails and clamps outnumbers copper. A few copper rings and one copper pouch of spherical shape with knobs at either end are among important finds from the site.

Saraswati Kunda, District East Nimar:

The site is situated on the southern outskirt of Harsud town in Harsud taluk of district East Nimar. The excavation (IAR 1987-88, Nath 2007: 297-300) at this site was carried out as part of salvage archaeology operation of the submergence area of Narmada Sagar Dam Project. The excavation here has yielded the evidence of both Brahmanical and Jaina pantheons in the form of structural and sculptural remains.

Balikeswar Temple Site, District East Nimar:

The site (22° 16' N; 76° 40' E) lies on the left bank of Narmada is a medieval temple site which was selected for excavation (IAR 1987-88, Nath 2007: 305-10) as part of salvage operation in the submergence area of Narmada Sagar Dam Project. The excavation has revealed three phases of structural activities at the site preceding and succeeding the present temple activity of Balikeswar. Phase I (post Gupta period) is represented by brick structure laid in front and back of the temple. The exact nature and extent of this brick structure could not be ascertained, as it was disturbed by the structural activities of phase II. In phase II the existing Balikeswar Siva temple facing east was built in stone over the remains of brick structures of phase I by further cutting a shallow pit into bed rock. Phase III, is characterized by another structural activities at the site that included construction of another Siva shrine. Besides these structural phases, the antiquities that have been
recovered from the site include three copper coins, a thin copper bowl, a shell bangle fragment and a tone plaque depicting Vishnu and Lakshmi.

**Harsud Garhi, District East Nimar:**

The site (22° 06’ N : 76° 44’ E) lies to the north of the mohalla Rajagali Tekdi in Harsud Town, district East Nimar. The excavation (IAR 1987-88, Nath 2007: 329-32) at this site was taken up as part of salvage archaeological investigation in the submergence area of Narmada Sagar Dam Project. The site yielded pottery ascribed to 1st-2nd century AD. Without any break in culture a few pottery types of the preceding period persist in the later phase classified as medieval. Two phases of cultural deposits has been recognized from the site. In phase-I the pottery type was characterized by red polished ware and associated red ware of thin and medium thick fabric with red slip, but devoid of any further decorative treatment. The pottery of phase-II is distinguished by darkish grey ware, red ware both coarse in fabric and poor in treatment. The slip is mostly applied on the outside and is occasionally vanished. In phase-I structures of mud floor was found whereas in Phase-II, the structures of random rubble and burnt bricks are noticed. No antiquities were found from upper phase except some corroded copper coin. In lower phase terracotta beads, shell bangles, stone ball, iron axe, iron chisel, iron nail etc were found.

**Chichali, District Khargone:**

The ancient mound at Chichali (22° 8’ N : 75° 22’ E) is located in Kasrawad Tehsil of Khargone district. This rich Chalcolithic site was taken up for excavation (Mittra 2000: 45-49, 2007: 221-31) as part of salvage archaeological investigations in the submergence area of Sardar Sarovar Dam. This site having a cultural deposit of about 4.5 meters has yielded the evidence from Ahar to Jorwe Chalcolithic phase succeeding by Early Historical period divisible into four cultural periods.

**Period-I (Ahar Period):** Characterized by the occurrence of large quantity of white painted black and red ware. The structural evidence of this period are characterized with squarish or rectangular, single, multi-chambered houses with common mud wall in between supported by a series of wooden posts. Steatite beads, saddle querns and in-situ ceramics were commonly found. Besides the main pottery type, other ceramic variety recovered
include black painted buff ware, red ware, incised red ware and dull red ware. The other antiquities that have been recovered include terracotta humped bull, beads of jasper, steatite, shell and decorated terracotta. A large quantity of charred grains of wheat, cereals and pulses has also been collected. Microliths and animal bone fragments have also been collected.

**Period-II (Malwa Culture):** During this period a larger area at the site was occupied. The house plans that were noticed were circular, squarish, and rectangular mostly in east-west orientation. The mud walls were usually provided with wooden posts. Floors were usually preferred with mud plaster. Bright red ware, a characteristic feature of Malwa culture is found in this period. Besides, black on red ware, red slipped ware, dull red ware, chocolate slipped ware and grey ware constitute the major ceramic types. The designs (Babjirao 2007) on the ceramic include motifs like flora and fauna (Sahu 2007) besides geometric patterns. Important associated finds include large sized copper chisel, parashu like object, fish hooks, rods and bits of copper, terracotta animal figurines, beads of steatite, agate, stone, shell, bone and terracotta etc. Besides large amount of faunal remains, various charred grains have also been recovered. Microliths have also been recovered.

**Period-III (Jorwe Period):** This period witnessed a drastic change in dwelling patterns and ceramic production. Evidence of large multi-chambered house complex was noticed on plan and floors and walls of houses were mud plastered. Apart from squarish and rectangular house plans, circular house plans were also noticed. The ceramic industry of this period is essentially red ware, black painted red ware and red ware. Besides, dull red ware, red slipped and chocolate slipped ware, grey ware was also found. The painted designs generally comprise geometric and floral motifs. Other associated finds include terracotta human (Bhattacharya 2007) and animal figurines, copper fish hooks, antimony rods, beads of agate, chalcedony, carnelian, steatite, shell, stone; shell bangles, querns, mullers and polishers in stone. Large quantities of microliths are also recovered.

**Period-IV (Early Historic Period):** This period is marked by the advent of iron and black and red ware. Besides, some of the preceding cultural traits also continue during this period. There is a drastic change in house pattern. Circular, squarish and rectangular house types were preferred. Lime plastered floors with a series of post holes were commonly noticed. Hearths, legged querns and circular bins are invariably associated with house
plans. The iron objects recovered include hoe, arrow heads, points, clamps and nails; copper objects comprise antimony rods, fish hooks, points and ornaments. The other important antiquities of this period include terracotta figurines, ear studs, spindle whorls, games men, net sinkers, skin rubbers, beads of various material, etc.