

CHAPTER VIII

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The archaeological investigations carried out by the author between 1991 to 1995 have brought to light sufficient new evidences on the cultural history of the Sirmaur district. The researches revealed stone tools, pottery, coins, sculptures and antiquities ranging from the palaeolithic through late - Harappan, Painted Grey ware, N.B.P. - Grey ware, Kushana, Early medieval and Medieval cultural remains.

Palaeolithic tools had already been known from the Markanda and Saketi area and the Tons valley but the investigator discovered new sites yielding chopper chopping tools, levallois flakes and blade-like flakes from eight new sites as described in chapter II.

The most valuable contribution of the survey has been the discovery of 133 new settlements in the district. These settlements go back to the late - Harappan times. The settlements belonging to the late - Harappan period are seven located in zone III (Markanda basin) and zone IV (Kayarda Dun). The Painted Grey ware settlements have been found at seven sites, again in zone III and IV. The N.B.P.-Grey ware settlements number 32 and occur in all the five zones with twelve in zone I, one in zone II, seven in zone III, 11 in zone IV and 1 in zone V. The Kushana sites are

discovered at 88 spots, twenty five from zone I, twenty from zone II, twenty three from zone III twenty from zone IV, and two from zone V. The early medieval settlements discovered number 85, with 22 in zone I, 17 in zone II, 20 in zone III, 20 in zone IV and 1 in zone V.

The settlements of the Delhi Sultanates and Mughal periods includes 61 sites. Zone I has yielded 19, zone II 11, zone III 15, zone IV 15, and zone V, 1. The distribution of the sites reveals that the late harappans and the Painted Grey ware people intruded into the southern part of the district in successive waves as agricultural pastoral groups. The N.B.P. - Grey ware period makes a manifold increase in the settlements suggesting expansion of the agriculture in the five zones of the district. Some of settlements of the periods are distinguished by a relatively larger size. Occurrence of coins of copper cast coins and human and animals terracotta figurines. The period marks perhaps the growth of urbanisation by Mauryan times, in the district which needs to be further investigated. The Kushana period represents the height of agrarian expansion in all the five zones. The discovery of Kushana coins, terracotta votive tank, apsidal temple and structures made of burnt bricks and dressed stones. Some of the the settlements seem to have attained the importance of marketing centres or administrative centres. The early

medieval settlements more or less reveal continuity of habitations. A number of copper and silver coins and stone sculptures and temple remains have been discovered. The medieval settlements have decreased in number but a variety of coins both silver and copper have been collected from these settlements. The sculptures and the temple remains are on decline now perhaps with the growth of Bhakti and Sufi movements. However, several bronzes and masks have been discovered in the temples which have been in use from ninth century A.D. to the seventeenth century A.D.

The settlement study revealed that there was a shifting population from the plains into the Sirmaur district in late Harappan, PGW, N.B.P. and the Kushana periods. It also reveals that most of the settlements suggest agricultural expansion. But at least 53 of these sites have yielded iron slags, twelve in the NBP period, nineteen in Kushana period and twenty two in the early medieval period). It is interesting that the iron ores came to be tapped from N.B.P. period at a number of sites. The occurrence of iron slags, coins, sculptures and architectural remains as well as wheel made pottery suggest growth of specialisation of crafts and commerce. It is interesting to note that the Sirmaur district came to be occupied only in 5 pockets of zones up to the medieval times. Extensive areas of the hilly terrain remained under the forest cover. It is surprising that this vast forest wealth has depleted during the last two centuries or so.

The Sirmaur sites reveal almost a continuous interaction with the plains of its south. This is borne out by the ceramic tradition, their manufacturing techniques and forms. The art traditions of manufacturing sculptures, terracottas, toys, ornaments and temple architecture, coins, religious beliefs and rituals. But it was not a one way traffic. The inhabitants adapted to the new social and natural environment in the area and worked out a material culture. That reveals various inter woven strand synthesised into a common pattern with its peculiarities and general features.

The study has, for the first time, revealed a history of cultural developments, it has left several gaps to be filled by future researchers. To give a few instances the survey did not throw any light on the later phases of Stone Age cultures and its transformation into the food producing stage. No neolithic settlements have been discovered from the area so far.

Another limitation of the present work pertains to the area of cultural relations. We have yet to discover the inter cultural relations. We have yet to discover the intercultural relationships between the late - Harappan and the aucthonaus tribes, the PEGW people and the late-Harappans - NBP-Grey ware urban people and the PGEW people etc. There is also needed to examine the process of

cultural developments transforming into successive socio-economic stages. But this is a stupendous task which can only be taken up by conducting horizontal excavations at selected sites and further intensive explorations.