

CHAPTER III

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The explorations conducted in Sirmaur district of Himachal Pradesh between 1991 and 1995 have brought to light 133 settlements in all. The distribution of the settlements reveals their clustering in 5 pockets (Map 3). Cluster number I lies in the northern most corner of the district in Rajgarh Tehsil, largely between Basari *nadi* and Bajhetu Ka Khala, both tributaries of the Giri, flowing along the Western periphery of the area. A few sites lie on the north of the Basari *nadi* periphery of the cluster outside the district. Cluster number II is mainly confined to the south of Giri and north of the Kawali *nadi* in the Pachhad Tehsil. A few sites scatter on the periphery to the north of the Giri as well as on the Jalal *nadi*. Cluster number III includes sites located on the Markanda and its tributaries in Nahan Tehsil. Cluster number IV is confined to the Kayarda zone and the sites lie on the Bata *nadi* and its tributaries, in the lower reaches of Giri and along the Yamuna which divide the district from Uttar Pradesh in the south-east. A small cluster can be identified on the Tons river in the north-east of the district.

In all 133 settlements have been discovered in the course of exploration. Thirty seven of the sites constitute

Cluster I. Cluster II has twenty seven sites. Thirty one sites have been discovered in Cluster III. Cluster IV has thirty four sites in it, while Cluster V includes only four sites.

The discovery of pottery, coins, sculptures and structures from the sites have helped in building a tentative sequence of cultures in the region ranging from late-Harappan O.C.W. culture through P.G.W. culture N.B.P. - Grey ware culture, Kushana, early Medieval and Medieval periods. There have been discovered only seven post-Harappan settlements in the district. Three of these occur in Cluster III zone of the Markanda valley, while four of the sites are located in Cluster Zone IV of the Kayarda Dun. It is evident from the locations of the post-Harappan sites in the southern parts of Sirmaur district that the first colonisers entered the area along the Markanda from Haryana and across Yamuna from Saharanpur district of the western U.P. The typology of the pottery and its surface preservation reveals close affinities with O.C.W. or late-degenerate Harappan pottery of the adjoining areas.

The Painted Grey Ware settlements are only five. Two of these are located in the Markanda valley and three others in the Kayarda region. Site no. 90 in the Markanda zone and no. 111 in Kayarda zone are located on the post-Harappan deposits, while others broke new grounds. The occurrence of P.G.W. settlements only in southern parts of the

Sirmaur district suggests their arrival from northern parts of Haryana along the Markanda and across the Yamuna from Saharanpur district in U.P.

The N.B.P.-Grey ware settlements reveal a more than six times increase as compared to the P.G.W. phase. These include 32 sites which are now distributed in all the five sub-zones. There have been discovered twelve settlements from zone I in trans-Giri area. Zone II (cis-Giri) has yielded only one site. Zone III Markanda valley has seven settlements of the period, while zone IV (Kayarda Dun) revealed eleven settlements. Zone V (Tons valley) has yielded only the remains of one settlement. It seems that the N.B.P. - Grey ware people moved into trans-Giri zone for the first time, while also settling down in southern parts of Sirmaur district. They also broke new ground in cis-Giri and Tons-Giri zones though on a limited scale. It seems that the trans-Giri zone and the Kayarda region along the Yamuna became important areas of habitation by this period. The location of Asokan rock - edict at Kalsi near the confluence of Tons and Yamuna is on the border of the Kayarda zone. The largest number of settlements (88) belong to the Kushana age. The trans-Giri zone attracted the largest number i.e. twenty five settlements, while zone II also marked a major in-flow of people with twenty settlements. Zone III and IV respectively had twenty one and twenty settlements in the

period. Very few people, however, moved upward into the Tons valley as there are only two settlements there of the Kushana period.

Early medieval period has 85 settlements suggesting almost the same frequency of settlements as in the Kushana age. Of these twenty two settlements are located in zone I, seventeen in zone II, twenty three in III, twenty two in zone IV and only one in zone V. While the early medieval settlements have increased in the Markanda valley and the Kayarda zone, it shows a little decrease of sites in zones I and II.

Medieval sites have been recorded at 61 places. Nineteen of these occur in zone I, two in zone II, fifteen in zone III, fifteen in zone IV and one alone in zone V. On the whole the N.B.P. - Grey ware period marked an expansion of agriculture in different pockets of Sirmaur district. But the peak was reached in the Kushana period when the number of settlements came to be more than doubled. The early medieval sustained the settlements and the agrarian population of the area, which gradually declined in the medieval times.

A glance of the frequency of settlements in different periods in the district can be had from Table 1 given on next page.

Table 1: Frequency of sites

Culture	Zone I	Zone II	Zone III	Zone IV	Zone V	Total
Late Harappan	-	-	3	4	0	7/133
PGW	-	-	2	3	-	5/133
NBP grey ware	12	1	7	11	1	32/133
Kushana	25	20	21	20	2	88/133
Early medieval	22	17	23	22	1	85/133
Medieval	19	11	15	15	1	61/133
	37	27	31	34	4	

It is very difficult to evaluate settlement sizes and their hierarchy in the district for three reasons. Firstly, it is largely a hilly region and the sites are located on small patches of flat land (terraces) on the slopes of the hills. The rains have caused great erosion of the habitational deposits on the slopes through the ages. Very little in fact has been spared for us to salvage it today. Secondly, a number of sites have been reoccupied in successive periods. Naturally the subsequent habitations have covered the earlier remains at these sites. Thirdly, the limited land available to the peasant settlers has been subjected to intensive cultivation. This has been subjected

to intensive cultivation. This has resulted in the destruction of ancient sites. The result is that today most of the sites reveal flat surface and are recognised mainly by the occurrence of potsherds.

The late Harappan and the P.G.W. settlements are very small and do not exceed more than 50x50 metres in area. These are located in proximity to each other in zone III as well as in zone IV. They appear to be small hamlets of peasant pastoral communities.

In the N.B.P. - Grey ware period some of the settlements are slightly larger. For example Manpur Devara (No. 107) in zone IV happens to be the largest N.B.P. - Grey ware settlement with half an hect. area. The site has also yielded a cast copper coin of the pre-Christian era. In zone II, Barman II happens to be a big site and has yielded terracotta mother goddess figurines.

The Kushana settlements grow still larger in some of the cases. Some of these are located above the N.B.P. - Grey ware deposits. The longer settlements of the period include Kulath (No.28) in zone I, Dimber Bhanog (No. 58) in zone II and Barman-II (No. 73) in zone III while the former two sites have yielded Kushana copper coins. From the last was found a Yaudheya copper coin. All these sites have revealed the use of mud bricks of typical Kushana size. The other settlements are small.

The early medieval settlements do not show any major change in size although a few of the settlement of the period have yielded silver coins. Among these sites Jangla Bhud-II (No. 82), has yielded a hoard of Indo-Sassanian coins. Palion (No. 82) yielded Samantadeva type silver coin. From Papri (No. 94) were also recovered silver plated Samantadeva type coins. But this site is also distinguished by the discovery of brickbats and dressed stones used for architecture. All these sites fall in zone III.

In zone IV, however, Rampur (No. 110) is among the longer. It has also yielded a silver washed copper coins of Samantadeva.

The medieval sites seem to have lost not only in the number of settlements but also in sizes.

In the absence of specific diamentions of the settlements and any horizontal excavation, it is not possible to work out the population estimates for the Sirmaur district with any exactness. It is, therefore, not attempted here.

There is no doubt that bulk of these 133 settlements between post Harappan and the medieval time seem to have occupied different parts of the Sirmaur district for subsistence based on agriculture and stock breeding as is the case even today. The choice of the location of the settlements would not only depend on the natural environment and ecology of the zones but also on the socio-economic

structure of the people occupying the zones. The level of technology being given, the social groups decided to occupy a part of the available land either maintaining their relationship with the body politic in the plains or for refuge.

The occurrence of coins, pottery, brick sizes and sculptures reveal their commercial, cultural and perhaps political relationship with the social set up in the adjoining plains. The medieval settlements indicate a similar interaction as copper and silver coins of Khiljis, Tughluqs, Lodis, Mughals and the princely states of Marathas, Sikhs, Rajputs and Gurkhas have been discovered from the region.

The iron slags have been discovered from 12 N.B.P. - Grey ware period sites, 18 Kushana period sites, 22 early medieval sites. In the N.B.P. - Grey ware period iron smelting was done at three sites in zone I, one site in zone II, four sites in zone III, three sites in zone IV and one site in zone V.

In the Kushana period iron slags have been recorded from four sites in zone I, six sites in zone II, six sites in zone III and three sites in zone IV.

Iron working is attested at three sites in zone I, five sites in zone II, nine sites in zone III and five in zone IV of the early medieval period. It is evident that

iron smelting was an important occupation in all the zones from N.B.P. - Grey ware period into Kushana and early medieval periods. The location of iron ores in the region and its commercial use attracted was made possible the location of these settlements of the iron working specialists. The growth of second urbanisation the discovery and working of iron ores in this hilly terrain.