Chapter – V

THE EARLY FARMING CULTURES:
STRATIGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE
The explorations conducted for the study of different aspects of Early farming cultures of Muneru river valley has brought to light large quantities of cultural materials belonging to Neolithic, Megalithic and Early Historic periods from 72 sites. Though enough care was taken to collect the materials from the surface and also from the Pits wherever it is possible from the sites with a view to establish the chronological and cultural sequence in ceramics and other associate finds of different periods, phases and cultures in majority of the sites, it was not possible to do so, as the materials of different cultures were thoroughly mixed up. The excavations conducted at Nagarjuna Konda (Soundara Rajan, K.V. 1958: 48-113; R. Subrahmanyam et. al. 1975) Kesarapalle (Sarkar, H. 1962) and Gandluru (IAR, 1982-83; 1983-84) in Guntur and Krishna districts respectively which are not far removed off from Muneru river valley are not of much help in the present context as they did not revealed any tangible clues for the major changes that occurred during the periods under study especially the impact of the environment, physiography and ecological features on the economy of the people of Muneru river valley. The revealed data of the excavated sites intermittently dotted with lacunae which sometimes observed the total reconstruction of the ways and life of early farming cultures. Hence the situation necessitated fresh probe to investigate the sequence and contents of the life styles and the economy of the early farming cultures of Muneru river valley by resorting to fresh stratigraphical scrapings at couple of promising sites.
Besides this, the black painted red ware tradition popularly known as Patapedu ware (Foote, R.B. 1916) which is also found from certain sites at Poosalapadu (Foote, R.B. 1914; Sarma I.K. 1967, 1968), Palavoy (Reddy, V.R. 1976), Ramapuram (Narasimhaiah IAR 1979-80) and Ash mounds of Western Andhra and their absence in the habitational mounds of Muneru Valley are also required to be probed to identify the reasons for their absence.

Hence, stratigraphical scrapings became necessary to obtain:

1. The stratigraphical framework for the pottery and the other associated finds recovered from the newly explored 72 sites of Muneru river valley and to prepare a chronological and cultural sequence.

2. The chronological range of black painted red ware and ashmounds in Muneru river valley and the reasons for their absence.

3. Useful information on the life and patterns of the early farming cultures of Muneru river valley in respect to the house plans, artefacts, economy, social life etc.

4. To identify the role of metal especially the Iron on the settlement and subsistence pattern of megalithic and Early Historic periods.

To obtain objectives mentioned above, three mounds were taken up for stratigraphical scrapings namely Kondapeta located on the left rank of river Krishna, Pallagiri on left bank of river Muneru both in Krishna District and Peddapuram on the right bank of River Wira in Khammam District. In doing so,
the author has taken care to stratigraphical representation of different cultures that have existed in Muneru river valley. While Pallagiri is providing the evidences for Neolithic, Megalithic and early historic periods, the Kondapeta is providing evidences of Neolithic and Megalithic periods where as Peddapuram is represented by Megalithic and Early Historic cultures. Thus the stratigraphical scrapings at these sites provided over all picture of the three different cultures and the relationship there in among these sites. Further it is also the intention of the author to identity the cultural changes among these three river valleys i.e. river Krishna for Kondapeta, river Muneru for Pallagiri and river Wira for Peddapuram. There are three basic reasons for selecting these three sites.

1. At all these sites, the surface collections have yielded different cultural materials belong to Neolithic, Megalithic and early historic periods.

2. These three sites are located in strategic localities in the present area of research.

3. All these sites are multi culture sites which were not much disturbed on account of the human and natural activities.

KONDAPETA (Lat 16°39' N Long 80°12'E) (PL. VI A)

Kondapeta, a hamlet of Kodavatikallu is a small village on the left of the river Krishna in the Nandigama taluk of Krishna District. It is located 7 kms to the south-west of Chandullapadu and 26 km north-west of Nandigama.
The archaeological mound which is ashy grey surface soil is located 1 km to the west of the village on an elevated land surfaces with in a distance of 2 km from the Krishna river. A wet weather stream locally known as Gandivagu flows close by and ultimately drains into Muneru river. The mound is oval on plan and extends to an area of 3.27 hectares (187 m x 170 m) and rises to a height of 1.95 m with the longer axis spread parallel to the Krishna river in east-west direction. The rock surfaces which are eroded on account of flood activity of Krishna river show that the area was occasionally inundated during floods. But however, there are vast stretches of arable land which might have prompted the Neolithic folk to have a longer occupation at the site. A part of the mound in the southern side is uniformly dug by the local people to a depth of 1 meter. The recovered surface collections from the mound include ground stone tools in various stages of preparation, by product flakes, wasted flakes, pottery, mullers, querns, steatitie disc beads etc., of Neolithic period and a couple of megalithic pot-pieces.

CUTTINGS (PL. III A) :

A small trench measuring 4.5 m x 3.5 m with the longer axis oriented to north-south is laid at the center of the mound close to the pit dug by the local people. The natural soil occurred at a depth of 1.46 meters.

DESCRIPTION OF LAYERS (Fig. 18) (PL. III B)

Layer 1 is 18 cm thick and composed of pale yellow earth and Kankar nodules. It is very much disturbed on account of ploughing during agricultural activity. The
layer contains mixed materials such as modern pottery and objects, megalithic material and pottery and a few sherds of Neolithic period.

Layer 2 contains compact brown earth and sand. It is 28 cms thick and undisturbed. It contains predominately wheal made black and red, brown red slipped and black sherds, iron lumps and implements such as a rod and a pin, pottery, 3 terracotta beads etc. indicating that the layer was formed principally during megalithic occupation.

Layer 3 is 38 cm thick and contains compact sand mixed with calcareous materials and pebbles. The layer is benefit of any cultural material and shows that the layer was formed due to silting on account of natural calamities such as floods and inundation for certain period resulting in the formation of baren layer.

Layer 4 is composed of compact light brown earth intermixed with bits of ash and charcoal. It is 38 cm thick and contain large quantities of pot pieces of burnished grey, pale grey, buff and brown wares mostly made on fine clay, a solitary broken piece of ground stone axe, couple of querns, mullers, animal bones and four steatite disc beads. Couple of unburnished pot pieces of coarse fabric are also recovered from the layer.

Layer 5 is 26 cm thick and composed of loose dark brown soil with lumps of ash. Steatite disc beads are absent while a couple of red ochre painted sherds, large number of burnished pot pieces of grey, pale, grey, buff and brown wares of fine clay and limited quantity of coarse sherds are recovered from the layer. Couple of
broken ground and polished stone axes, mullers, querns and bone pieces were also recovered from the layer.

Layer 6 is composed of compact yellow earth about 16 cm thick. It seals a mud floor at its bottom. The floor is made of rammed earth and contains remnants of a structure and Neolithic cultural materials such as pottery, ground stone tools red ochre painted sherds and crystal-quartz blades.

Layer 7 is composed of white murum, the natural soil of the area.

**STRUCTURES :**

The structural evidences at Kondapeta with regular walls are conspicuous by their absence. But, however, on the basis of couple of post holes present in the layers 6 and 4 the structural reconstructions are made.

Structure I : The remains of a structure (fig.20) ¾ portion of which extends beyond the balk facing the west is found at a depth of 1.27 m. It is sealed by layer 6. It is made up of 13 post holes each of which is 9 cm in diameter and arranged in double rows in a circular form of approximately 3.2 m. The floor is prepared by rammed clay and bits of charcoal and ash is strewn on the top of the floor. Ash lumps are also found across a hearth, partly covered by the balk facing the west. The materials from the floor include considerable number of burnished and slipped hand made pot pieces, cattle bones, broken mullers and querns, red ochre painted sherds and a broken ground stone axe.
Fig. 19  KONDAPETA: PLAN OF CIRCULAR HOUSE
Structure II: The remains of the structure (fig.21) are found at a depth of 0.38 m and sealed by layer 3. The floor is made up of clay mixed with fine gravel. It contains a hearth, made of 3 stones kept in a close proximately and triangular on plan. Inside the stones ash, and broken pot pieces are present indicating that it was in a regular use during Neolithic period. Close to the hearth are found a muller and broken quern piece. A single post hole probably belonging to the central pole of a thatched structure with a conical roof is available near the balk facing the east.

PALLAGIRI (Lat 16°37’ N Long 80°19’E) (PL. IV A)

Pallagiri is located 5 km to the east of Nandigama the Taluq headquarters, on the road to Madhira in Krishna District. A well built bridge across Muneru river provides jeepable transport facility to the village from Nandigama Town.

The ancient mound is locally known as Pallagiripadu is located on the eastern slop of an isolated granetoid hillock situated 2 km to the west of the village. River Muneru flows abutting the hill on its western side. The mound is rectangular on plan, 2.3 m thick and extended to a larger area of 6.88 hectares (320 m x 215 m) during the megalithic and early historic periods. During the Neolithic period, the habitational mound might have confined to a smaller area of 3.87 hectares (215 m x 180 m) and accumulated to a thickness roughly of 1.40 m. The eastern part of the mound is leveled down for wet cultivation while the remaining mound is intact and undisturbed. The site is a multi cultural site and
Fig. 20  KODAPETA: PLAN OF RECTANGULAR HOUSE

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was occupied during Neolithic, megalithic and early historic periods. The surface collections from the site include ground stone tools, pottery, mullers and quern pieces of Neolithic times and few pot pieces of megalithic and early historic periods.

**CUTTINGS:**

Two trenches were laid at different heights within a distance of 85 meters.

**PLG – I:** The trench laid at the highest part of the mound to obtain complete cultural sequence of early historic, megalithic and Neolithic periods is labeled as PLG-I. It measured 5 m x 3 m, the longer axis oriented towards east-west. The digging is restricted to 3m square from the depth of 1.75 m as antiquities become rare from this level. The natural soil is obtained at a depth of 2.10 m.

**PLG-II:** PLG-II is 4 m x 2 m trench and was laid at the periphery of the mound and about 85 m to the east of PLG-I in north-south orientation. The trench has yielded megalithic and early historic cultural materials comprising of pottery, terracotta beads, iron slags etc. The natural soil was obtained at a depth of 1.16 m. The main aim of two trenches is to obtain information about total cultural sequence and cultural entities in PLG I and cultural sequence of megalithic and early historic periods at PLG II based on the surface collections at the site.
LAYERS (Fig. 21):

PLG – I : (fig. ). Layer 1 : It is 20 cm thick and composed of pale grey soil and disturbed due to agricultural activity. The layer has yielded predominately the early historic megalithic and Neolithic pot pieces.

Layer 2 : It is 14 cm thick, undisturbed and contains slightly compact light brown sandy earth. The recovered cultural materials include red slipped, black, grey and dull red pottery, terracotta beads and objects, couple iron rods of early historic period.

Layer 3 : It is composed of loose ashy grey soil. It is 35 cm thick and sealed a mud floor at its bottom. It has yielded wheal made pot pieces of black and red ware, black ware, brown and red slipped ware, two terracotta beads and few iron slags of megalithic period. Except a few pot pieces of brown ware which are made on coarse clay, the remaining pot pieces show fine clay of superior variety and as such they are thin and sophisticated.

Layer 4 : It is 28 cm thick and composed of compact earth mixed with lime. The layer contain couple of wheal made thick sherds of black and red ware, brown ware and black wares and few iron slags of megalithic period.

Layer 5 : It contains compact brown earth and is 38 cm thick. It seals a rubble floor made up of Kankar nodules. The cultural material recovered from the layer include sand made unburnished coarse sherds of brown, black, grey sherds, one broken edge ground stone axe, couple of damaged mullers and quern pieces of Neolithic period.
Layer 6: It is 35 cm thick and composed of loose dark grey soil. It seals a mud floor at its bottom which contains a rectangular structure. The layer has yielded fine grained, burnished pot pieces of grey, buff, pale grey and brown sherds and a few mullers and pounders of Neolithic period. The layer has also yielded three full steatite disc beads and a couple of cattle bones.

Layer 7: It is composed of hard black clay, the natural soil of the region. It rests on grey morum, the disintegrated bed rock of the area.

PLG – II:
Layer 1: It is 20 cm thick, and contains pale yellowish loose earth. The layer is very much disturbed on account of agricultural activity and has yielded mixed variety of pot pieces principally of early historic period and a few sherds of megalithic and Neolithic period.

Layer 2: It is undisturbed, 25 cm thick and contains compact brown earth mixed with sand. It has yielded brown, black, grey and red slipped pot pieces, terracotta beads, and a few glass objects of early historic period.

Layer 3: It is composed of loose grey soil mixed with ash. It is 30 cms thick and contains wheal made black and red ware, black ware, brown ware and red ware, couple of terracotta beads an iron rod, and a few bones of megalithic period.

Layer 4: It is composed of relatively compact yellowish earth. It rests on compact black clay. The pottery, iron slags and animal bones of megalithic period are the main objects from the layer.
CORRELATION OF LAYERS : PALLAGIRI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layer</th>
<th>PLG – I</th>
<th>PLG – II</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Pale grey sandy loose earth.</td>
<td>Pale loose earth mixed with sand.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Compact light brown earth mixed with sand</td>
<td>Compact brown earth mixed with sand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Loose grey soil mixed with ash.</td>
<td>Loose grey soil mixed with ash.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Compact brown earth</td>
<td>Natural soil-compact black clay.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Loose dark grey soil mixed with ash and charcoal pellets</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Natural soil-compact black clay</td>
<td>---</td>
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FLOORS & STRUCTURES - PALLAGIRI – I :

Pallagiri has yielded two floors of which one has given evidence for a structure. The evidence for a floor prepared by rammed earth mixed with sand and containing a structure is obtained at a depth of 1.35 m. It is sealed by layer 6. The structure contains 10 post holes arranged in rectangular fashion occupying roughly 4m (Fig.22). It is oriented east west direction. The post holes of Northern side are extended beyond the balk where as the post holes of three sides are within the trench. The floor has brought to light couple of broken pieces of grey and brown pottery and a few broken mullers and quern pieces and a ground stone axe of Neolithic period. A few cattle bones and evidences for a hearth (not exposed) is also available on the floor.
Fig. 22  PALLAGIRI: PLAN OF RECTANGULAR HOUSE
PEDDAPURAM (Lat 17°51’ N Long 80°26’E) (Pl. VI : B)

Peddapuram is a small village located 20 km to the north of Madhira on the road to Khammam, the district head quarters. The River Wira takes a sharp meander and flows close to the village on its eastern direction. The area is composed to Alluvial and Tuvva soils.

The ancient mound is situated 1 km to the west of the village. The mound is spread to an area of 5 hectares (264 m x 189 m) and rises to a thickness of 1½ feet from the ground level. 2/3 part of the mound is used for dry cultivation while the remaining part is presently used for wet cultivation. The artefactual material recovered from the site provide the evidences of black and red ware, brown ware and black ware sherds of megalithic period and wheel made red slipped, brown, black pottery of early historic period.

CUTTINGS:

A small trench measuring 4 x 3 m. is laid on the center of the area with longer axes oriented to North South direction. The natural soil obtained at a depth of 1.1 meters. The trench has not brought to light any evidences for structures except the evidences for megalithic and early historic cultures.

DESCRIPTION OF LAYERS:

Layer I contains ashy grey loose surface soil of 20 cm. depth. It is partly disturbed on account of dry cultivation. The layer contain brick bats,
slipped red, black, brown pot sheds of early historic period and a few black and red ware sherds of Megalithic period.

Layer 2 contain compact brown soil of 38 cms depth. It is undisturbed and contain black, brown, grey and red slipped pot pieces of early historic period. Other materials of early historic period such as querns, mullers and broken pestles are also recovered from the layer.

Layer 3 contain comparatively loose ashy grey soil of 32 cm. thick. It is undisturbed except for a small pit dug from layer 2. The cultural material obtained from the layer indicate that it was principally occupied during megalithic period and the recovered objects include wheal made fine grained pottery of black and red ware, black ware, brown ware, iron slags, iron rods and terracotta beads of megalithic period.

Layer 4 contain compact brown earth and sand of 20 cms. thick. It seals the Kankary brown morum, the surface soil of the area. The layer provided the occurrence of megalithic cultural material such as black and red ware, black ware and a terracotta bead.

**CULTURAL CORRELATION**: The stratigraphical scrapings conducted at three sites namely Kondapeta, Pallagiri and Peddapuram has confirmed the cultural sequence of the materials collected from the surface. The stratigraphical scrapings at Kondapeta has yielded materials of Neolithic and megalithic with a stratigraphical gap between the cultures, the materials recovered from the stratigraphical scrapings at Pallagiri provided the evidence of Neolithic, megalithic and Early historic periods. The Peddapuram on the other hand
provided the cultural material of megalithic and early historic periods in succession.

But however, there occur phase wise difference in the cultural materials of Neolithic period recovered from the stratigraphical scrapings of Kondapeta and Pallagiri. The bottom layers of 6 and 5 at Kondapeta has yielded large quantities of fine grained (Fabric B) hand made and burnished pottery and very few gritty sherds (Fabric A) where as layer 4 has yielded large number of gritty fabric with unburnished hand made pottery and limited quantity of fine grained pot sherds. This show that when the Neolithic folk made their settlement at Kondapeta, they were using fine grained levigated clay for the preparation of pots often with slipped and burnished surfaces which in coarse of time deteriated in composition and surface treatment and as such resulted in the presence of pottery made on gritty substances. Further, the technique of preparing the pots with thin sections with the help of split bamboo piece or read used to remove high angularities and finger impressions and the use of burnishing technique was also frequently found in the fine fabric. This means that the Neolithic potter paid much attention while preparing the pots while he was initially settling at Kondapeta and its adjoining Neolithic sites such as Kunikinapadu, Pokkenuru and Kisanabanda on the bank of river Krishna. But it appears in due coarse the deteriation took place in the Neolithic culture and it has resulted in the presence of coarse grained pottery in the upper layers i.e. layer 4.
This phenomenon is well documented at Pallagiri where the bottom most settlement at the site is Neolithic period. But the pottery from the beginning is comprised of pottery made on gritty core substances which gives the impression that the potter was not careful in preparing the clay that was used in pot preparation which is akin to that of II phase of Neolithic pottery of Kondapeta. This gives an impression that the Neolithic folk made their settlements at Pallagiri and its adjoining Neolithic sites namely Thatigummi, Jujuuru, Sanagapadu etc. at a later date i.e. during deteriorating stage which can be co-equated to the II phase of Neolithic culture of Kondapeta. In this connection, it might be surmised. That the III phase of Nagarjuna konda may be co-equated with the II phase of Kondapeta and the sites of Pallagiri and similar sites of Muneru river valley. In this connection, it may be presumed that the South Indian Neolithic culture which has its early phase at Bellari and Raichur doab in coarse of time spread all along the Krishna river and when it reached lower Krishna valley i.e. kondapeta and its adjoining areas was surpassing mature phase i.e. II phase and reached the Muneru river valley when the Neolithic culture was in deteriorating stage i.e. the III phase.

This explanation also holds good in the comparison of the pot forms of I and II phases of Krishna river valley i.e. Kondapeta and its adjoining sites and Muneru river valley i.e. Pallagiri and its adjoining sites. The pot forms of Kondapeta are thin, sophisticated and burnished with a variety of pot forms such as high necked vessels, vessels with wide mouths, flared, everted, flattened rims with bulbous bodies, lids, basins, bowls, tubular spouts and channel spouts etc. Besides that red ochared painted sherds are also recovered in considerable
members. There are few gritty core made vessels also at Kondapeta, but they are very limited in quantity. But when come to the Neolithic sites of Pallagiri and its adjoining sites of Muneru river valley, the pot forms are thick and unsophisticated and mostly of wide mouthed, carinated; bulbus bodied vessels without much variety in bowls, basins etc. Further, the spouts and channel spouts and red ochre painted sherds are conspicuous by their absence.

When come to the question of settlement analysis of Megalithic and early historic periods, these cultures are single phased and seems to have spread to Krishna and Muneru river valleys almost at the same time, but only after the deteriorating phase of Neolithic culture took place. This is identified with the stratigraphical gap between the mature phase of Neolithic and megalithic cultures at kondapeta but continuously found at Pallagiri and its adjoining sites. Further, the megalithic culture has brought along with it the smelting of Iron technology which has resulted in adopting to new areas such as red soils where in the iron implements were variously used for ploughing, digging either for water source or for agricultural purposes. Hence, from the megalithic and early historic times onwards, the settlements are dispersed and spread to the larger areas in Muneru river and its tributary valleys and hence there are large number of settlements in the infertile areas such as red soils, sandy soils etc.