THE EARLY FARMING CULTURES OF MUNERU RIVER VALLEY (ANDHRA PRADESH)

SYNOPSIS

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The Archeological investigations during the last few decades has moved the Prehistoric studies into a new phase. Previously the majority of prehistorians were concerned with artefact typology and technology, its development through time, and the sequential and regional relationships of assemblages of stone and ceramic artefacts. But the new findings of pre-historical studies of recent times has brought to light new approaches in the fields of geomorphology, palaeontology, palaeobotany and palaeoclimatology, throughout the world, there has been an increasing swing towards considering past cultures in their totality.

The study of artefactual evidences that were brought to light during the pre and proto-historical periods in the orient has brought to light that there existed two formative stages in the socio-economic and cultural evolution of human beings from the beginning. These stages are identified by archaeologists as food gathering stage and food producing stage respectively as Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods. The basic criteria adopted by the archaeologists was based on the tools and artifacts recovered from different prehistoric sites which were prepared, used and discarded by the human beings for their sustinance either through the collection of food or production of food. The tools and artifacts recovered to us have the history of thousands of years and the objects survived during the ravages of natural and physical transformations through long
gap of time are only stone, bone or ceramic objects and basing upon the technological developments observed on the tools through the scientific observations, land use patterns ecology etc., these two formative stages are identified.

The early farming settlements in any region can be identified on the basis of the three basic traits. The primary trait that sets it apart from the other cultures is deliberate food production as opposed to mere food gathering, as the means of subsistence of human beings. This trait is found, in the occupations of agriculture and animal husbandry. The second trait is the adoption of settled life. It is indicated in the archaeological record by the way of regular construction of huts and houses in clusters. The third important trait is the introduction of new technology characterized by smoothened stone tools and pottery, which in course of time led for smelting of metal and paved the way for the use of Copper, Bronze and Iron tools. Thus a full fledged sites of early farming settlements are characterized by all the above traits.

In order to reveal different aspects of ancient cultures, the help of different sciences and disciplines have been sought. The introduction of settlement pattern studies, (Willey, G.R.: 1953) in archaeology which is basically a geographical concept, a new era was started in the reorientation of the cultural aspects of early human beings. It has in fact dwarfed the earlier criteria of explaining the economy, culture and society
of human beings. The settlement pattern studies aims to explain the socio-economic and cultural aspects on geographical basis, and as such it provides solutions to various aspects of human life for which answers were not provided earlier. After Willey work a number of studies pertaining to settlement pattern studies were carried in Europe (Chisholm, M. 1979; Chang, K.C. 1958), America (Flannery, K.U. 1972; Cook and Haizer. D., 1968), and Middle East (Adam 1965), but as per India is concerned they are still in infancy. But considering the importance of this study, a number of scholars in India, only recently have began studies in this field (Dhavalikar, M.K., 1977, 78a, 78b, 79, 82, 83; Dhavalikar, M.K. & Posshl, G.L. 1974; Chilalwala, Y.M. 1977; 79; Possehl, G.L. 1980; Surej Bhan (1977); Makhan Lal (1984); Shinde (1984); David Raju, B. (1986, 87, 89 etc.). My study of the settlement pattern of the Early Farming Cultures is similar in its nature and first of its kind in Muneru River Valley in lower Krishna Basin.

The area chosen for the present investigation is Muneru river valley comprises relatively smaller area not exceeding 200 km in the western part of Krishna, Khammam and Warangal Districts of Andhra Pradesh. This region being located in the uplands of these districts and, hence the dry cultivation is the main activity of the people and as such the area is not very much disturbed on account of the modern methods of cultivation. It provides sample evidences of agricultural activities of early
agriculturists and stands as an ideal area for the present study. The area is traversed by Muneru river with its major tribularies such as Akeru, Katleru and Wira and minor tributaries which passes through different environmental niches such as hilly region, valleys and plain land surfaces and traversed by infertile red soils and fertile black cotton and alluvial soils before it empties down in Krishna River near Chandrullapadu. The archaeological explorations conducted at the area has brought to light that it is the home land for different cultures from times immemorial starting from food gathering stage of Palaeolithic and Missolithic times to the food production stage of Neolithic, megalithic and early historical periods and had a continuous cultural interaction at different times with different economic criteria. Hence the present archaeological investigations in the Muneru river valley is an ideal area to make an enquiry about the settlement and subsistence patterns of early farming cultures.

The available data categories fall under three heads i.e. archaeological, environmental and ethnographic.

**DIVISIONS OF CHAPTERS :**

The present work is divided into 10 chapters.

Chapter I deals with introduction. It provides the information about the concept of settlement pattern studies in Archaeology and its
role in reconstruction of the past societies whose feeble traces are left to us. The Chapter also deals with the aims, objectives data categories used in compilation of the dissertation. The chapter also provides information on the division of chapters and a brief details of each chapter.

The Chapter-II aims to bring out the physical conditions of the present day Muneru river valley such as the land farm, drainage pattern, soils, climate, flora and fauna and the other ecological factors of the area to identify the geographical and topographical situation of the early farming settlements during Neolithic, Megalithic and Early Historic periods.

The site descriptions are given in Chapter-III. All the aspects such as the location of the sites, drainage pattern, extent, habitational deposit, cultural sequence was given due considerations to identify the ecological factors and to bring to light the exact factors responsible for the early agricultural settlements in the area under present consideration.

The Chapter-IV gives a graphical description of the representative artifacts such as pottery, ground stone industry, metallic objects and other artifacts belong to Neolithic, Megalithic and Early Historic cultures from all the explored sites. In the process equal importance is given to all the artifacts of all the cultural entities recovered from the sites.
Chapter V deals with the stratigraphical scrapings conducted at Kondapeta, Pallagiri of Krishna District and Peddapuram of Khammam District with a view to correlate the surface finds from the explored sites with the excavation data. Care was however taken to represent all the three cultures such as Neolithic, Megalithic and Early Historic Periods to represent in the stratigraphical scrapings. Besides these, the known data from Nagarjuna Konda and Kesarapalle excavations and the scientific debree clearance at Gummadudduru and Alur are also utilized as per the requirement of the chapter.

The Chapter VI aims to bring out the settlement pattern of the early farming cultures of Muneru river valley. The chapter not only provides a brief history of settlement pattern studies in Archaeology, it also emphasis on different aspects such as locational analysis, drainage pattern, soils, site typology etc., which are responsible for the establishment of early farming cultures at Muneru river valley. The chapter also deals with the demography of the extinct cultures based on scientific models.

Chapter VII aims to provide information on the subsistence pattern studies in archaeology. Besides this, the cultivation of food plants, the domestication of animals and various other practices of food gathering of South Indian Neolithic and Megalithic cultures are discussed in the chapter. An ethno-archeological enalogy and its practices are discussed in
the chapter to focus the antiquarian relationship of Neolithic and Megalithic cultures.

Chapter VIII discusses the concept of ethno archaeological model to bring out an understanding of life ways of extinct cultures like Neolithic and Megalithic periods. The ura chenchus, a sub-sect of chenchu community which has changed its original aboriginal traits and adopted to cultivation and pastoralism is taken as a model to predict the life ways of the early farming communities of Muneru river valley. Various cultural practices of ura chenchus used in cultivation, domestication, hunting and preparation of household goods are discussed to bring out analogy of life ways of early farming communities under study.

The early farming cultures of South India with special reference to Andhra Pradesh based on the data obtained from the already published work is provided in Chapter – IX. The various cultural components, the chronology and the new elements that are embibed by the early farming cultures from time to time is discussed.

A Summary and Conclusions of all the work enumerated in the above chapters in the present thesis is given in Chapter – X.