

K. P. NAUTIYAL – B. M. KHANDURI

New Cultural Dimension in the Central Himalayan Region of Uttarakhand An Archaeological Assessment

INTRODUCTION

The central Himalaya comprising the region of Uttarakhand, spreading in about 55,400 sq. km. with rugged and uneven topographical features, was geographically a viable unit of the ancient Aryavarta. Its hoary antiquity was only discernible through a prolific description of the ancient Indian literature – from the *R̥gveda* to the *Purāṇas* – which represented it by a set of nomenclatures, suggesting that with its rapid environmental and cultural changes, different names came to be adopted at different intervals. These names denoted a particular meaning to a particular area (*kṣetra*). For instance, the area between Hardwar (Gangādwar) at the Himalayan foothill in the south upto Kailash (Ratnastambha) in the extreme north and Nanda Devi (Nandāgiri) in the east to Kāshtagiri (near the sources of river Tons) in the west was earmarked as an area of Kedār-khaṇḍa¹. Similarly, Kumaon, spreading in the south upto the high mountains and passes like Niti and Darma leading to the country of Tibet to the foothills and towns like Bareilly and Rampur in the south; and in the extreme east the valley of river Kali (Sharda), that divides Nepal from it upto the boundary line of Garhwal in the west, was better known anciently by the name of Kūrmācala (Nautiyal 1969: 5). These geographical territories sprawling far and wide carried homogeneous characteristic features nourishing several important cultural traditions under a different wave length. The receptivity of the region was remarkable as it continued adding several new streams of cultural and religious ideas along with the influx of recluses and devotees from the Indian plains and even the tribal communities in hordes from the north-west treading through the high mountain passes and entering into the widely extended green

¹ *Sri Sakāida Mahā-Purāna, Kedārakhaṇḍa*, ch. 101, vv., 30-31.

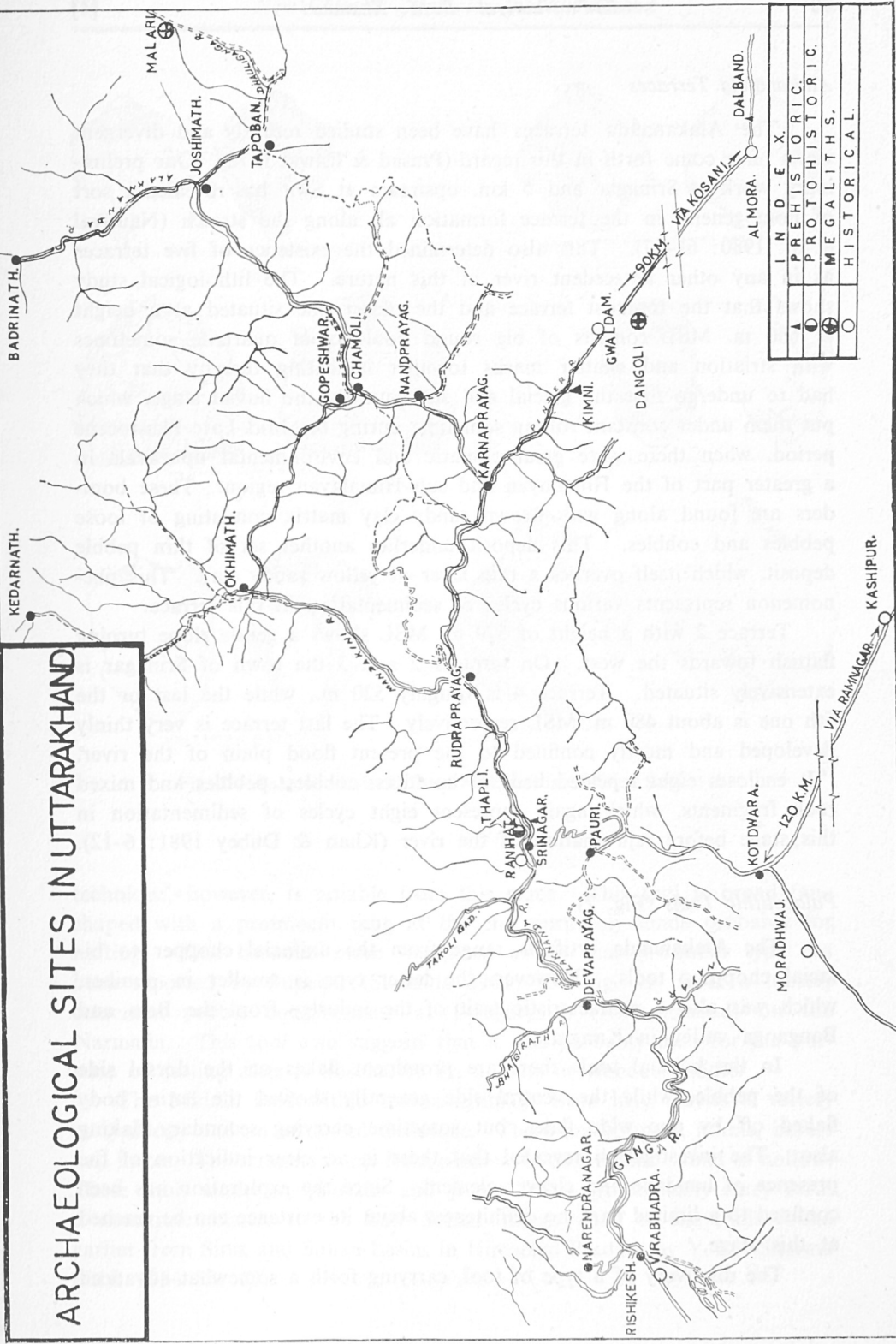
pastures. The first major migration was that of the Khaśas along with some of their associate tribes. The Khaśas were considered to be nomadic, yet belonging to a branch of the Aryan stock (Nautiyal 1969: 18). The Khaśas seem to have left their homeland in central Asia due to some unknown economic upsurge or probably due to the overgrowth of population sometime around the 2nd millennium B. C. This process of movement continued unabated for sometime to come and so during the Upaniṣadic and the Sūtra periods, the area was occupied by the Uttarakurūs and the Uttara–Madrakas (Tucci 1977: 48). The Uttarakurūs are placed along with the Mādrakās and so S. Lévi suggested that they should be located near the sub–Himalayan northern tribes. Later their land becomes in Hindu cosmography, a kind of paradise on earth (Lévi 1918: 124)². This was thus a type of a politico–cultural change, which effectively worked through for a long time to come even upto the advent of the 1st century A. D.

PREHISTORY

But barring these literary traditions, there are several archaeological discoveries made within the last four years, which have attempted to fill the cultural gap by providing data pertaining to the growth of human habitat and civilization in the region (see map, Fig. 1). The recent investigation in the Alakananda valley has somewhat established the potential of prehistoric research in the area. Before this no serious attempts in search of palaeolithic implements were made here, whereas the rest of the Himalayan region had undisputedly proved the existence of early man. The first discovery of prime significance was made by DeTerra and Paterson in 1939 in the north–western part of the sub–continent, mainly in the valley of Sohan (DeTerra & Paterson 1939). Afterwards, Sankalia in the early seventies found the palaeolithic implements from Pahalgam in Kashmir (Sankalia 1974: 34–8). Later on Joshi et al. (1974: 369–79) explored the river Liddar and also the Sind valley and reported the discovery of palaeolithic implements. Similarly in the sub–Himalayan region of Himachal Pradesh Olaf Prufer (1965: 99–123), B. B. Lal (1956: 58–92), R. V. Joshi, (Joshi et al. 1975: 464–5), Y. D. Sharma (*IAR* 1954–55: 58, pl. LXII), D. Sen (1955: 177–84) and G. C. Mohapatra (1974: 199–212) brought to light the lithic industries in this area.

² Quoted from Tucci 1977: 48.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN UTTARAKHAND



I N D I A	
▲	PREHISTORIC.
◻	PROTOHISTORIC.
⊕	MEGALITHS.
○	HISTORICAL.

Uttarakhand

Alakananda Terraces

The Alakananda terraces have been studied recently and divergent views have come forth in this regard (Prasad & Rawat 1978). Our preliminary work at Srinagar and 5 km. upstream at Swit has revealed a sort of homogeneity in the terrace formation all along the stretch (Nautiyal et al. 1980: 61–67). This also determined the existence of five terraces as in any other antecedent river of this nature. The lithological study shows that the topmost terrace and the oldest one situated at a height of 630 m. MSL consists of big round boulders of quartzite sometimes with striation and chatter marks together indicating thereby that they had to undergo first the glacial and subsequently the fluvial stage, which put them under constant rolling sometime during the Mid–Late Pleistocene period, when there were great climatic and environmental upheavals in a greater part of the Himalayan and sub–Himalayan region. These boulders are found along with brown sandy clay matrix consisting of loose pebbles and cobbles. This deposit underlies another set of thin pebble deposit, which itself overlies a thin layer of yellow sandy clay. This phenomenon represents various cycles of sedimentation in this terrace.

Terrace 2 with a height of 579 m. MSL shows a gentle slope turning flattish towards the west. On terraces 2 and 3 the town of Srinagar is extensively situated. Terrace 4 is roughly 520 m., while the last or the 5th one is about 480 m. MSL respectively. The last terrace is very thinly developed and mostly confined to the present flood plain of the river. "It encloses eight repeated beds of boulders, cobbles, pebbles and mixed rock fragments, which again represent eight cycles of sedimentation in this stage before rejuvenation of the river (Khan & Dubey 1981: 6–12).

Palaeolithic Tools (Fig. 2)

The Alakananda artifacts range from the unifacial chopper to bifacial chopping tools. However, the latter type is smaller in number, which was also a characteristic trait of the industry from the Beas and Banganga valley in Kangra.

In the bifacial tools there are prominent flakes on the dorsal side of the pebble, while the ventral side generally showed the entire body flaked off by one wide flake, but sometime carrying secondary flaking also. The investigation revealed that there is no clear indication of the presence of handaxe and cleaver element. Since the exploration has been confined to a limited part, no definiteness about its existence can be reached at this stage.

The discovery of a type of tool, carrying forth a somewhat advanced

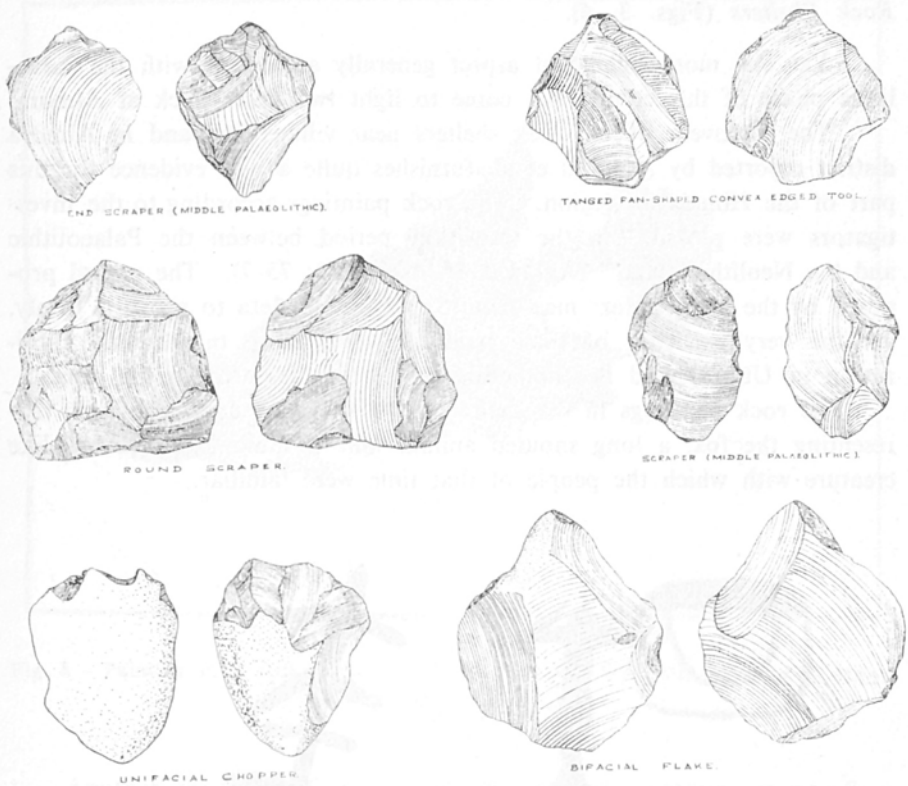


Fig. 2 – Palaeolithic tools from Alakananda Valley. Scale 1:4.

technique, however, is notable from this place. This tool is broad fan-shaped with a prominent tang at the end purposely made probably for hafting. This becomes more significant as an exactly similar type has been reported by Supekar (Sankalia 1964: 107, fig. 93) from a loosely cemented pebble conglomerate at Dongargaon (Hoshangabad) on the Narmada. This tool also suggests that it was probably used for the purpose of cutting after it was hafted on a bone or wooden handle.

The Middle Palaeolithic tool assemblage from here carries a variety in typology and an advanced technique. There are scrapers, points, borers and flakes. The scrapers range from concave to convex and round to hollow. These tools made on quartzite and jasper flakes typologically carry forth a near resemblance to the Late Sohan industry and to the tools found earlier from Sirsa and Sohan basins in Himachal Pradesh by Y. D. Sharma (*IAR* 1954-55: 53).

Rock Shelters (Figs. 3, 4).

Yet one more significant aspect generally associated with the mesolithic phase of this culture has come to light two years back at Almora.

The discovery of the rock shelters near village Dalband in Almora district reported by Agrawal et al. furnishes quite a new evidence for this part of the Himalayan region. The rock paintings according to the investigators were placed “in the transition period between the Palaeolithic and the Neolithic stage” (Agrawal & Joshi 1978: 75–7). The period proposed by the investigators may require some more data to prove it firmly, yet the very existence of these painting representing this human civilization in Uttarakhand is stimulating for further research in the area.

The rock paintings in the shelters bring before us a typical fauna representing the fox, a long snouted animal and a multi-legged lizard-like creature with which the people of that time were familiar.

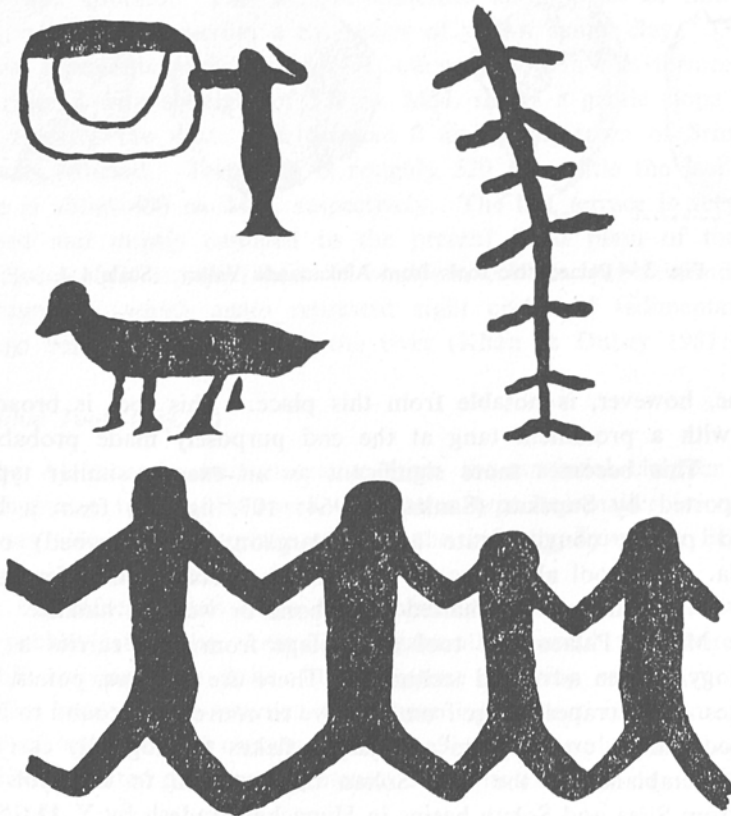


Fig. 3 – Rock paintings at Dalband, Almora. Scale 1:2.



Fig. 4 – Painting in a rock-shelter at Kimni, Chamoli Garhwal, depicting a dagger.
Scale 1:1.

Another evidence of a rock shelter, having paintings, comes from the Kimni village on the Gwaldam–Almora road in Chamoli district³. The semi-protruding rock shelter here bears a few paintings showing weapons, like a full dagger, some animals not identifiable due to rock weathering and reptiles painted in a very thin white pigment. Though no other supporting evidence regarding their period is available, yet they add to the significance of the Dalband rock paintings described above.

In contrast to the paintings from Central India, these rock paintings do not bring forth before us a variety of animals or a colourful human life, but their very discovery in Uttarakhand fills up some gap of the unknown prehistoric past.

³ The area of Gwaldam, situated on the Karnaprayag–Almora road, was explored in the month of September 1980 by the two Research scholars of the Department, namely, D. L. Rajput and S. S. Negi.

PROTOHISTORY (Figs. 5, 6; Plate Ia)

The Painted Grey Ware (PGW) culture generally placed in the protohistoric period is marked by the growth of urbanisation and the advent of Iron Age in north India, especially in the Indo-Gangetic plains. This culture, believed to be in between the Indus civilization and the Historical period, has gradually expanded its geographical span in the sub-continent commanding an area from Bahawalpur in the Indo-Pak border of Rajasthan in the north-west to Punjab and Haryana in the north-east extending further to a major part of the Ganga-Yamuna doab. Towards the south it is extended upto Ujjain and in the east upto Bihar.

The Painted Grey Ware was for the first time found in 1940-44 at Ahichchhatra in District Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, in its lowest levels by an excavation (Panigrahi & Ghosh 1945: 37-59). This was followed by the discovery of a few more sites like Hastinapur (Lal 1955: 50-62), Rupal (*IAR* 1953-54: 9; 1954-55: 6-7), Purana Qila (*IAR* 1970-71: 8), Mathura (*IAR* 1954-55: 15-6), Sravasti (Sinha 1967) and Kausambi (Sharma 1960) in the north and Ujjain (*IAR* 1956-57: 20-8) in the south. Recently it has also been found from Allahapur (*IAR* 1970-71: 40-1), in Meerut district and at Jodhpura (*IAR* 1958-59: 74) in Rajasthan. It was, however,

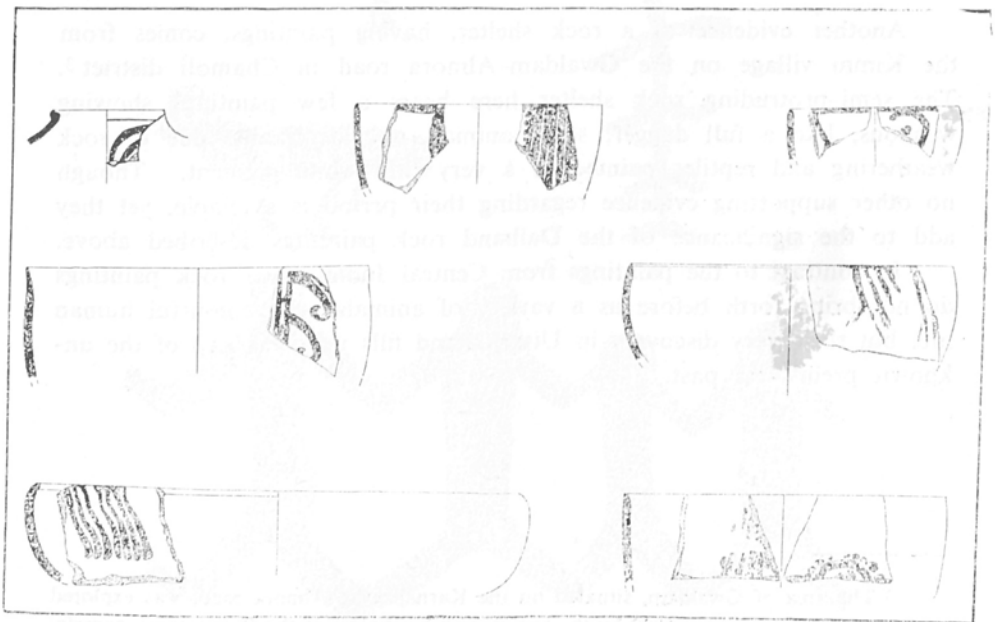


Fig. 5 – Painted Grey Ware, from Thapli, Tehri Garhwal. Scale 1:4.

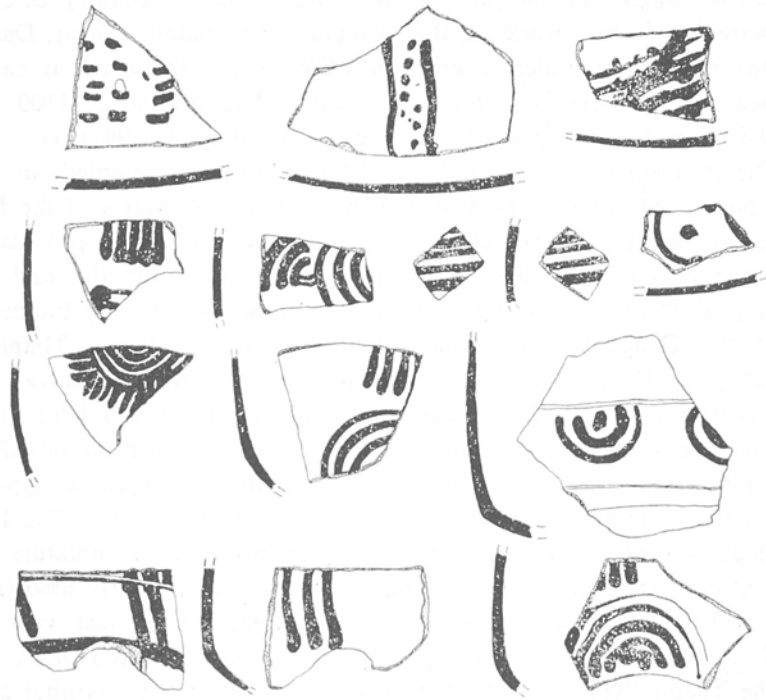


Fig. 6 – Designs on Painted Grey Ware from Thapli, Tehri Garhwal. Scale 1:3.

by the excavation at Hastinapur by B. B. Lal that this culture was given a stratified position. The pottery generally found as dish and bowl, which is the major component of this culture, is grey in colour with a thin fabric made of well levigated clay and prolifically painted outside and inside the pot both with geometric and non-geometric designs. On the basis of its widespread occurrence in the Indian sub-continent it was christened as the Painted Grey Ware culture and was associated by Lal with the later Aryan tradition of the *Mahābhārata*. Lal (1955: 23) had given it a time bracket of c. 1100 to 800 B. C., while Wheeler (1959: 28) placed the beginning of the PGW in the 8th century B. C. Since Lal's excavation in 1951–52, much more archaeological data have been added, which suggested several new sets of dates. For example, Gaur on the basis of his excavation at Atiranjikhhera (Gaur 1969) placed it between c. 1100 to 600 B. C. The Noh evidence supported this time span (*ibid.*). The Allahapur excavation however, puts it between c. 800–300 B. C. (Dikshit 1973: 148–53). Allchin (1968: 211) considering all these evidences placed it in between c. 1050–400 B. C., while Vibha Tripathi (1976: 68) in c. 800–400 B. C. According to Agrawal (1971: 88) from all the “archaeological evidences, there is

nothing to suggest an antiquity greater than *c.* 9th–8th century B. C. for this ware”. Joshi’s work at Bhagwanpura, Kathpalon, Nagar, Dadheri etc. has however, revealed a pre-iron PGW phase, by which it can be assumed that its beginning must have taken place around *c.* 1100 B. C. and the lower limit went upto *c.* 400 B. C. (Joshi 1978a: 98–107).

The problem of the chronology of this culture has adopted an enigmatic posture at present. Be that as it may, these discoveries of the PGW referred to above and the relative data prove its dimension and also its significance. Yet a notable extension of this culture for the first time throwing altogether a new light on an area, which was outside the periphery of the Ganga-Yamuna Doab, was reported recently at Thapli, in the Valley of Alakananda, near Srinagar in the Garhwal Himalaya. The site was discovered by D. L. Rajput of this Department and later put to a small-scale vertical excavation by us. The trial excavation revealed a single phase culture of the PGW along with all the associated types in red and black slipped wares, having a total deposit of 2.90 m. The PGW from here is confined mainly to the dish and bowl, but a miniature vase represented in this ware is significant and points out an early association as is evident from the Bhagwanpura excavation, where such vase was copied in grey ware from the late Harappan shape (Joshi 1978b: 180).

The Thapli PGW has several paintings, such as the sun symbol along with horizontal and vertical bands, dots, sigmas, concentric circles, leaf, floral patterns etc. done in quite a regular manner indicating a high class of maturity in paintings. A notable point to mention is that both the thin and the thick varieties of this ware are available here with paintings.

Among the other finds, special mention may be made of a terracotta bird, copper bangles, copper nail parers and terracotta beads. A large quantity of bones identified as that of the horse and other animals is also interesting to note. But there is no evidence of iron from this site, which otherwise was abundantly used in *c.* 6th–4th centuries B. C. This is self-evident from another excavated site at Ranihat (see below), which is roughly 4 km. south of Thapli.

The discovery of these cultural remains in such a remote part has for the first time established the association of PGW with the central Himalayan region thus extending its boundary further towards the extreme mid-north of India.

Megaliths(?) (Figs. 7, 8)

Henwood was the first to report in 1858 the existence of a few cairn burials at Devidhoora near Almora (Henwood 1858: 204–6). Later on Wheeler, while describing these funerary monuments of the north had

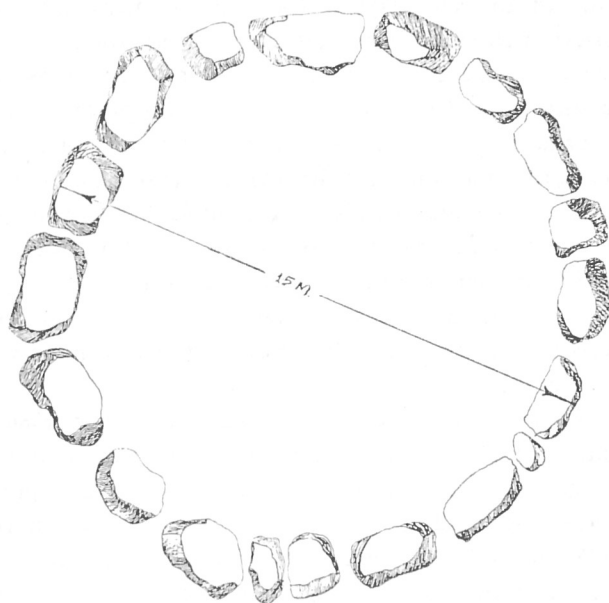


Fig. 7 – Megalithic burial at Gwaldam, Chamoli Garhwal. Scale 1:200.

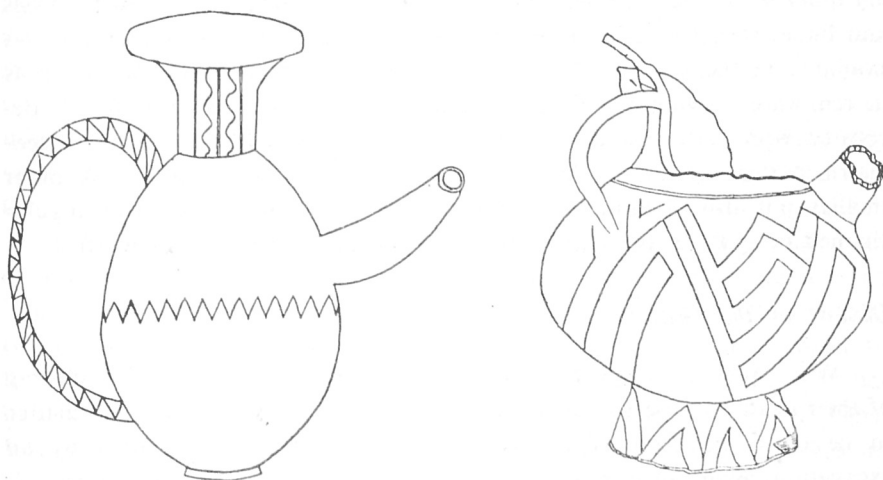


Fig. 8 – Funerary Megalithic pots, from Malari, Chamoli Garhwal. Not to scale.

stated that these are spread far and wide upto Almora, and even in the remoter depths of the Himalayan massif in the Leh valley of Ladakh, near the western border of Tibet (Wheeler 1959: 160).

The evidence of the existence of such burials in Uttarakhand is gradually coming forth in a greater number and so a few of them have been subjected to surface examination by a team of investigators. The explorations have revealed that the so-called Gwaldam-Bajjnath burials, which are now alleged to be the burials of the *naths* (mendicant with pierced ear-lobes) appear to carry the features of the megalithic burials generally found in the Indian sub-continent. These are square in shape and four feet in height. But since even now the area is being used as a burial ground by the modern day *naths*, it is difficult to distinguish the real megaliths from the new graves.

Another site with such interesting evidence is Malari (3800 m. MSL) in the Niti valley, 61 km. beyond Joshimath, on the bank of Dhauli Ganga. Malari was also explored by us on the basis of an earlier report made out by S. P. Dabral (1968: 223-35), who had noticed a few burials at this place and collected a few funerary pot-sherds. The recent survey has, however, brought to light a few significant aspects, which deserve serious consideration. Though the stone structures covering these burials have totally vanished due to road cutting, yet, according to information available locally, they were mostly rectangular in shape. In such road-cutting operation and further digging a few evidences indicated that the individual body was generally laid in an extended position in a pit containing funerary pots beside the corpse. In some other cases, however, pots with ashes and bones were found in the graves. Though recently no grave goods was available at the site, yet Khanduri was lucky to find two full spouted pots in red ware, having two different sizes; one with splayed-out mouth decorated with vertical and horizontal grooved lines making a sort of geometric pattern all along the body and also on the oval handle. Another smaller pot also decorated on the neck by black pigment and with angular chained designs on the entire body and the base is again noteworthy.

Genesis of the Graves

Who were these people, having practised this system of disposing of their dead in these graves in such a remote Himalayan region is a matter to be considered seriously. A large-scale investigation followed by an excavation might furnish facts about their genesis and related traits.

Meanwhile, the issue has adopted a bigger dimension and so any consideration of the Uttarakhand burials should be taken up in total perspective of the graves found all along the Himalayan region of Kashmir,

Ladakh, Lahul, Chamba and also in a major part of north-western India, anciently designated as the Gandhāra region. Some study of these burials located in the north-western part of the sub-continent has been made by Dani (1967), who calls them the Gandhāra graves denoting their existence in a particular geographical area. Much information was collected and published by the Italian Archaeological Mission in Swat, Pakistan (Silvi Antonini & Stacul 1972). Sankalia (1979: 108) also studied the problem and contended that these so-called Gandhāra graves on "circumstantial" evidence may be associated with the Aryans moving in groups towards India. Tucci (1977: 11) by his elaborate and excellent study, however, propounded that these graves appear to carry a close association with the Dardic communities of Swat, whose migration was a long drawn process since they "were spread over a large territory" (*ibid.*). He further elaborated stating that they chiefly came towards the Indus plateau from central Asia and gradually migrated to the south-eastwards direction. Tucci is further inclined to believe that the various Dardic tribes occupying the Swat region for quite sometime lived in some sort of "tribal confederations [...] in a condition of common equality" (Tucci 1977: 34). Some of these groups might have gradually pushed their way down towards the plains of India.

In so far as the Uttarakhand Himalaya is concerned, Tucci's views seem to be of some significance and so make us think about the migrating horde of tribes in this part of central Himalaya. It is more or less established that sometime in the 2nd millennium B. C. this area was subjected to a great migration. This process continued for a pretty long time, say upto the beginning of the 1st millennium B. C. Among such migrating tribes, the Khaśās were one of the predominating tribes, about whom it is now believed that they were the offshoot of the Indo-Aryans, migrating first to the north-western mountainous tract and, gradually infiltrating towards the north-east from Kashmir to Kangra and Garhwal to Kumaon. The Purāṇic geographical description also gives an explicit account of all the tribes together in a group suggesting that they lived in the Himalaya, probably under some confederation as suggested by Tucci (see above). The Purāṇic association as indicated by "Daradāś ca sa-Kāsmirīān Gāndhārān Aurasān" (Sircar 1960: 24) in relation to the Himalaya is significant in this regard. Even more than this Varāhamihira⁴ adds to his list the Abhisāra, Taṅgaṇakulūta, Kirāta and Cina, who were inhabiting a greater part of the Himalaya. All these tribes including the Daradas, who figure prominently in the Purāṇic description,

⁴ Varāhamihira, 1895 Benares ed., 97v, 29-30 (quoted from Tucci 1977: 11).

had probably penetrated as far as the highlands of Uttarakhand after covering a difficult stretch of Gilgit and Ladakh. They might have in the first course of their migration occupied the highlands bordering the Tibetan plateau and then gradually descended down to the Himalayan mainland. For example, the Taṅgaṅas who are also associated by Ptolemy (Nautiyal 1969: 15) with the Kirātas of the Taṅgaṅa-Viṣaya seem to have occupied the area around the upper course of the Alakanda. This is evident by their association with a place, known as Taṅgaṅī, located near Joshimath on the route of Badrinath. Taṅgaṅī has archaeologically proved potential after the discovery of a few unidentified tribal coins from this site. Though not significantly related directly to the Taṅgaṅa tribe, an inference can be made by this that the Taṅgaṅa-Janapada described as Taṅgaṅakulūta by Varāhamihira were the two *viṣayas* located respectively in the present Chamoli district of Uttarakhand and the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. To be more specific, Taṅgaṅa was in Garhwal, while Kulūta, as suggested by M. Ali (1966: 171) on the basis of Purāṇic evidence, was located on the bank of the Beas in the Kangra valley.

On the basis of the above analysis, it can be stated provisionally that the graves of the central Himalayan region of Uttarakhand belonged to a homogeneous group consisting of the Khaṣa-Dards, Abhisāras, Taṅgaṅas, Kirātas, who had settled themselves widely in this part of the country after covering a long course of migration from their ancestral homeland.

HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

The advent of the 6th century witnessed a cultural renaissance which helped in sprouting new ideas and traditions. However, the study of the cultural evolution in the foothills of Garhwal and Kumaon is still in its infancy. It appears from direct and indirect evidences that the region has served as a meeting ground of various cultural waves equally emanating from the north and the south. This seems to have been a pivotal region and so almost every traveller from Fa-hsien in the 4th–5th century A. D. to Hsuen-tsang in the 7th century A. D. visited either its heartland or the peripheral zone. This also happened in the case of emerging civilizations which directly affected the cultural milieu. The study of the cultural remains of a few sites will prove the veracity of the foregoing observations.

Ranihat (Fig. 9)

Amongst such sites worthy of evaluation, Ranihat near Srinagar, situated on the right bank of Alakananda, stands first. The terrace of

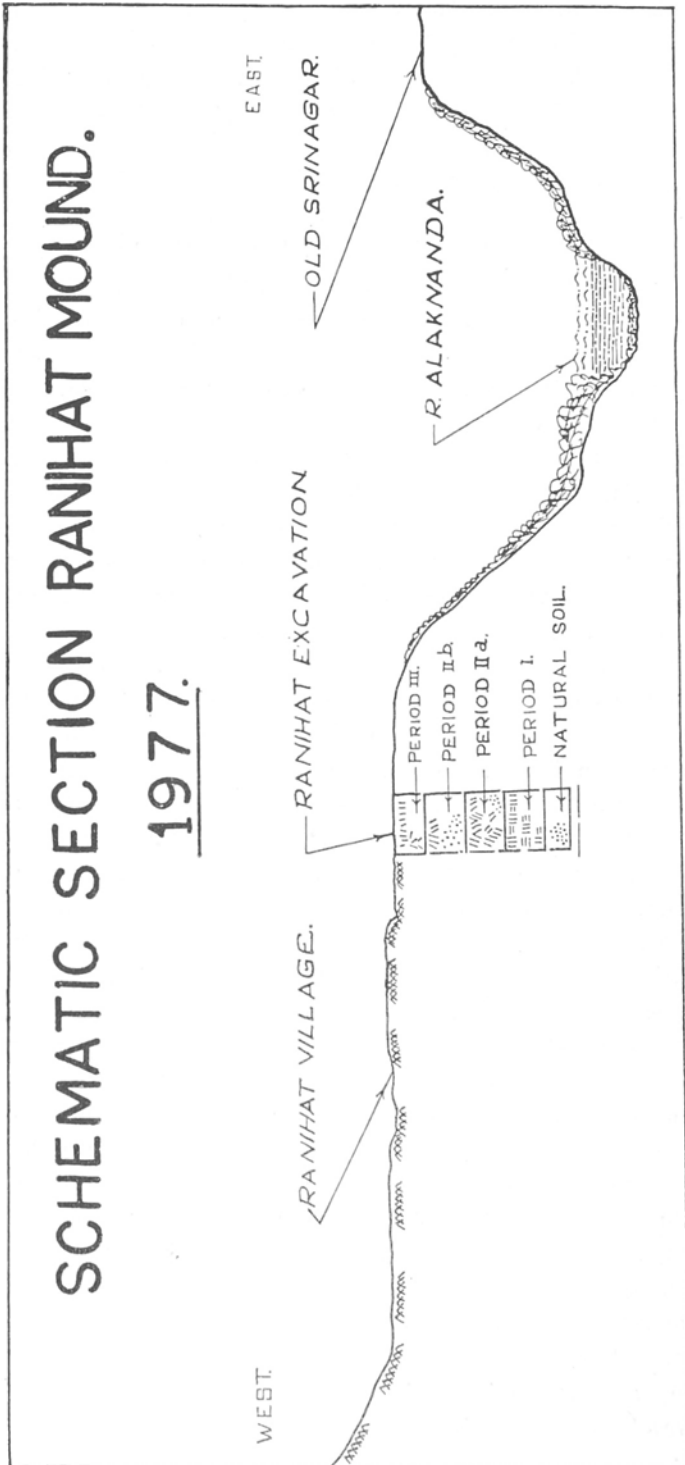


Fig. 9 - Schematic section across Ranihat mound, 1977.

Alakananda on which the site is located is spread north–south in an area for 10 km. Ranihat (Nautiyal & Khanduri 1977: 22–38) is a small hamlet of about 30 modern houses, but still with remains of several dilapidated ancient temples. On the basis of surface evidence it was taken up for excavation for two consecutive seasons in 1977 and 1978. Ranihat contained 10 layers having a total thickness of 3.25 m. of habitational deposits, which was further divided into three occupational periods, designated as Period I, Period IIA, Period IIB, and Period III. In a nutshell the respective periods yielded the following cultural material.

Period I gave evidence of a fine unpainted grey ware along with a thin glossy red and black polished ware. On the basis of similar evidences from Hastinapur (Lal 1955: 50–62), Sravasti (Sinha 1967), Kausambi (Sharma 1960), etc. this period was placed in *c.* 6th century B. C. to 4th century B. C. The people of this period knew the art of smelting copper and iron. The period was technologically advanced and in the similar manner of many sites in the country, and particularly for instance, that of Ujjayini (*IAR* 1956–57: 20–8) and Jaderua (Gwalior) (Nautiyal, in press), Ranihat also specialised in the smelting of iron from the locally available ores and manufacturing of tools. The cultural traits of Ujjayini and Jaderua are placed almost in the same period as that of Ranihat.

The above characteristics as revealed from excavation point out in a clarity of terms that the site of Ranihat, though located in the interior of the Himalayan region, had followed the same cultural principles and adopted similar technological methods as prevalent in the other contemporary cities of India. This in a definite manner, therefore, sheds all earlier doubts of this area's cultural isolation from the rest of the country.

The next period at Ranihat witnessed the use of bricks of various shapes and sizes. But an interesting discovery was a circular mud oven, having a 60 cm. diameter with an opening of 26 cm. towards the north–west. The mud and brick paste oven laid in the middle of the rammed floor probably suggests that it was some sort of a small foundry in the house. It was not very deep and so on scooping it, there was no substantial material content found here, excepting a few bits of charcoal and burnt bones. Yet it can also be presumed that this was probably a community cooking oven like any of those found at Ahichchhatra, Kaseri and Purana Qila in Delhi (Sharma 1976: 67), almost all placed contemporary to this period of Ranihat (*c.* 400 B. C. to 200 B. C.).

This period at Ranihat gave a variety of pottery such as the rimless *handi*, miniature bowl and Ahichchhatra 10 A type.

In period IIB people laid decent floors with the help of stones and used a few new types of contrivance, like the sprinkler, miniature vase, etc. However, in period III which descended after a gap of about 600

years, there were prolific stone structure activities, which included the building of many temples. This happened so in about the 8th century A. D.

Himalayan Foothills

From the interior of the Himalayas to the Siwalik foothills, one treads over many historical sites of prime significance. Though a large part of Tarai which was once considered to be marshy and inhospitable remains extensively unexplored, we have evidences through excavation that this particular area flourished prolifically after the 6th century B. C. A few sites mentioned below will reveal this story of continued cultural occupation in this area.

Kashipur

Out of these Kashipur situated in the foothills of Kumaon Himalaya, with a huge polygonal mound, was identified by Cunningham (1871: 300-2) as Kiu-pi-shwang-na of the Chinese pilgrim Hsüen-tsang, which is rendered by Julien as Govisana. Cunningham himself had tried to unravel its past and had reported the existence of a large room 21.94 m. in length from north to south by 19.20 m. in width, the walls of which were 1.82 m. thick. On the basis of it, the site was taken up for excavation by Krishna Deva in 1939-40 resulting in the discovery of a few brick walls. It was again in 1960 that the first author of this paper explored it and reported an inscribed image of Trivikrama, belonging to c. 8th century A. D., which is now lodged in the National Museum, New Delhi. He also collected a few potsherds of NBP ware and reported the discovery of a Kuṣāṇa gold coin right from the mound (*IAR* 1960-61: 67).

To ascertain better results the site was taken up for excavation by Y. D. Sharma in 1965-66 (*IAR* 1965-66: 53-4). This excavation revealed several structures including that of the Bhingaja hump. The operation exposed the southern wall of a structure, which was most likely of a temple, having decorated mouldings, *caitya* windows, etc. According to the excavator, the temple seems to have been thrown in disuse and was once again retrieved after 350 A. D. However, on circumstantial evidences, it could be said that the antiquity of Kashipur went as far back as the Painted Grey Ware period. The discovery of a few sherds of this ware from the debris near the temple further confirmed this.

Virabhadra

Virabhadra, another site, anciently known as the Māyākṣetra, is situated between Rishikesh and Hardwar. It was also excavated in 1973-74

by N. C. Ghosh et al. of the Archaeological Survey of India (Ghosh & Sharma 1976: 180–1).

The excavation revealed here cultures of the period ranging from A. D. 100–800, divisible into three phases. Phase 1 belonged to the Kuṣāṇa period, wherein were found Kuṣāṇa ceramics, bricks and Kuṣāṇa coins along with charred bones of animals.

Similarly, from the middle of the early level was found a Saivite sanctum, having a *Śivaliṅga* resting on the *bhadrapītha*. Only the eastern wall of this shrine was traced, while the other ones were overlain with the later walls. On the basis of brick sizes ($23 \times 15 \times 6$ cm., $22 \times 12 \times 6$ cm. and $23 \times 12 \times 6$ cm., which normally belong to the post-Kuṣāṇa period, the temple was assigned to the Gupta period.

Moradhvaj: the Site

Yet more than these two foothill sites, Moradhvaj has given some significant results. Moradhvaj, situated 13 km. south-west of Kotdwara, was taken up for excavation by us in 1979–80 and '81.

Moradhvaj seems to have attained importance long before and so attracted the attention of scholars like Cunningham (1871: 351) and Führer. (1891: 32). Prior to them the Chinese traveller Hsüen-tsang (c. 629 A. D.), travelling from Mo-ti-pu-lo now Madawar in Bijnor to P'o-lo-hih-mo-pu-lo (or Brahmapura), had related about a city on the east side of the Ganges or Gangadwāra, which according to him was the city of Mo-yu-lo or Mayura) about 2 li in circuit. Cunningham had identified Mo-yu-lo with Mayapur in Hardwar, but it was rejected by Watters saying that neither the transcription nor the direction, as given by Hsüen-tsang, coincide with the present Mayapur near Hardwar, which definitely falls in the west side of the Ganges rather than on the east as wrongly indicated the Chinese traveller (Watters 1904: 329).

From almost all such indications, the term Mo-yu-lo probably stood for Moradhvaj. This is so for the fact that firstly it lies on the east of the Ganges and secondly the term phonetically identified itself with the word *mayūra* (peacock). The area is famous for a large number of birds and so the name seems to have been derived from it. The term Mayūradhwaj designated for the city probably after the Kuṣāṇa period came to be related to some people with peacock standard as insignia of their cult.

This site was thoroughly explored by Cunningham in 1863, who had reported then about a ruined fort, having a height of 15 feet above the surrounding country. The entrance according to him, was on the eastern side. The ditch was 60 ft. broad and was surrounded at a distance of about 120 ft. from the main rampart covered by an outer rampart (Führer 1891: 32).

But yet one more notable aspect reported by Cunningham was about the so-called shigri mound, which according to him was 35 ft. above the interior level and 43 ft. above the plain surface with a circumference of 308 ft. (*ibid.*). This he believed to be a Buddhist *caitya*. Whatever might have been the position during his time and on that basis his own identification, the excavation conducted during 1981 more or less confirmed his hypothesis.

The excavations at Moradhvaj put the beginning of the site roughly in the 5th century B. C., continuing till the 3rd century A. D. without any break in between. The ancient deposits of about 800 years were divisible here into three occupational periods (Nautiyal & Khanduri 1979: 77-80).

The earliest settlement was characterised here by the use of NBP ware along with fine thin grey and red wares. The NBP mainly gave evidence of the existence of dish and bowl, having polish on the exterior and not invariably on both the sides. This puts us to compare it with a type found in the excavations at Kausambi. The burnt brick used in construction varied in sizes from $46 \times 20 \times 8$ cm. to $42 \times 20 \times 8$ cm. Out of the two areas excavated (MRD-1 and MRD-2) not many evidences of the building plan belonging to this period came to light. It was, however, clear that the walls were massive, even though the size of the room was not sufficiently big. From MRD-2 the evidence of earliest settlement showed a few planned rooms, though their walls were found greatly disturbed at various angles. But through another indication from MRD-3, it was revealed that right from the earliest times the people at Moradhvaj had started the use of rampart wall, which no doubt in the beginning of the 5th century B. C. was made of mud.

Period IIA (*c.* 2nd century B. C.-1st century A. D.) marked the beginning of the Śuṅgas and hence a proliferation in structural activities. The floors of this period were made of hard brick jelly. No evidence of a complete structure of this period has come to light. Yet the evidence indicates that the people superimposed the mud rampart with baked bricks.

The pottery of this period was the same as that found earlier in other sites of the Gangetic plains, but quite unusually the sprinkler came to be used so early during this period. The sprinkler was generally believed to have been a contrivance of the Kuṣāṇa and the Gupta periods. But at Moradhvaj this period appears to have seen the birth of this pot. The earliest out of them has a round globular body below the neck portion, which seems to suggest that it was a container of scent. Its prolific presence also tempts to suggest that it was probably used for some kind of beverage.

Amongst other finds, there were human and animal figurines, beads, cart-wheels, copper bangles, iron implements etc.

Period IIB (1st century A. D. to 3rd century A. D.) at Moradhvaj is prolific in every sense; say from the point of view of structures, sculptural and terracotta art, pottery, iron implements etc. The area during this time seems to have attained significance and so rapidly thrived unquestionably for a few centuries. Several structural remains prove the veracity of this statement. The bricks of this period varied in size and were respectively $24 \times 12 \times 6$ cm. and $25 \times 15 \times 6$ cm. In one of the excavated buildings at MRD-2, a 10 m. long corridor was found with a width of 1.75 m. flanked by rooms opening inside. The doorway entrance showed remnants of decorated brick pillars.

The earlier defence wall was further reinforced in this period by a mud mortar. The size of the rampart wall grew higher and the dimensions increased covering an area of about 3 km.

Moradhvaj: the Temple (Plate Ib)

Another significant discovery at Moradhvaj during 1980 was that of a building showing characteristic traits of a temple. Judging the periphery of the settlement at Moradhvaj, this building seems to have been situated in the centre of the Kuṣāṇa settlement and so there is no doubt that it carried by all means a religious significance. The temple is rectangular in shape with a total dimension of 9.70 m. It has a sanctum 2.20 sq. m. and a *maṇḍapa* 3.60 sq. m. The average width of the sanctum wall is 1.30, while that of the *maṇḍapa* is 1.55. The temple is exposed upto the depth of 2 m. covering at least 30 courses of bricks. The bricks used in the structure vary in size from $32 \times 21 \times 5.6$ cm. to $31.5 \times 20 \times 6$ cm. The temple is laid out in east–west direction, having its entrance to the west. But the most significant aspect of this temple is that it has a 2.30 m. wide circumambulatory path (*pradakṣiṇāpatha*), which appears to be a unique trait of a Kuṣāṇa temple so far found in India. It may be noted in this context that such an early brick temple excavated at Sonkh did not have any *pradakṣiṇāpatha* around it (Härtel 1976: 76–7, fig. 9).

Amongst pottery types, red ware is the main fabric sometimes decorated with stamped designs. The shapes coincide with those found in the associated Kuṣāṇa site in the Ganga Valley. The typology consists of sprinklers, inkpot, lampstand, spouted vessels, some of them with handles, miniature vases, etc.

Moradhvaj: the Sculptures (Plate II)

Another interesting discovery during the season of 1980 was that of two sandstone sculptures of Buddha measuring 31.5×23.7 and 25×15 cm. each.

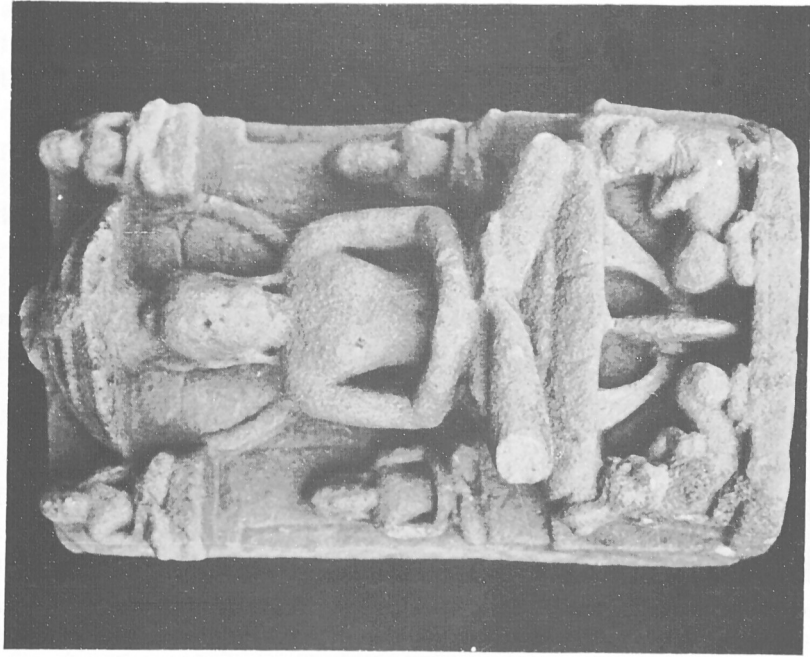
The first one is made on white sandstone, which appears to have



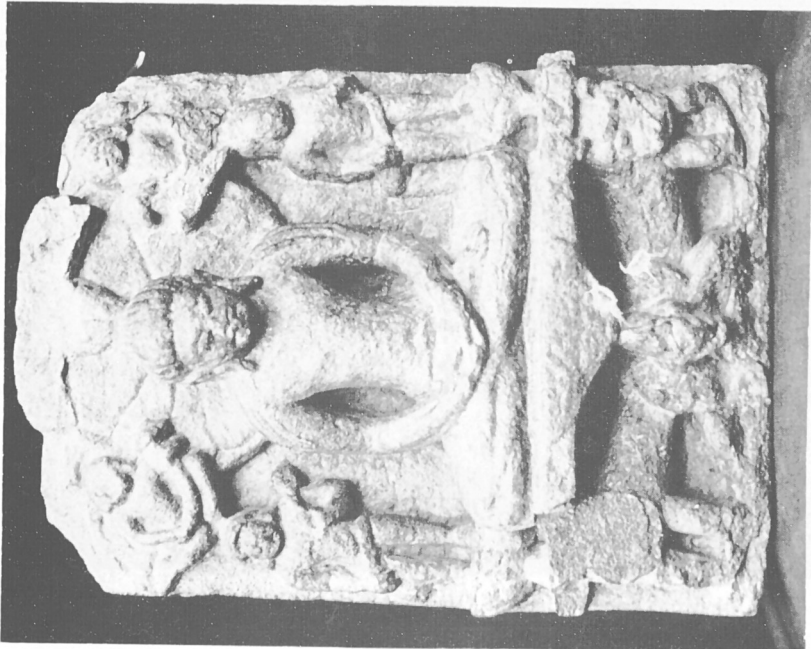
a) Thapli, Tehri Garhwal. General view of excavation of PGW site.



b) Moradhwaj. General view of excavated brick temple.



b) Buddha in *padmāsana*; Mathura sandstone; from Moradhwaj.



a) Bodhisattva; white sandstone; from Moradhwaj.



b) Terracotta depicting Kṛṣṇa slaying demon Keśi; from Moradhvaj.



a) Terracotta tablet depicting Buddha in *jñānamudrā*; from Moradhvaj.

suffered weathering. Seated in *padmāsana* over a lion throne, his palms in meditative posture, Buddha is shown here in the stage of Bodhisattva (Plate IIa). The face shows a perfect state of penance with the *uṣṇīsa* clearly exhibited on the head and the hair locks falling on the shoulder below. Similar to the Bodhisattva figure from Katra, it has two attendants and two flying *vidyādhara*s hovering in the sky. In all aspects this sculpture from Moradhvaj is more or less contemporary to the Katra figure and so can be placed in the Kuṣāṇa period. Another sculpture made of Mathura sandstone (Plate II b) is also seated in *padmāsana* on the lion throne flanked by four miniature Buddha figures around also seated in a similar posture. The halo is carved out of the *Ficus* (*vaṭa*) leaves, which is also stylistically working as a *chatra*.

The physiognomy and the style of representation place this image in the late Kuṣāṇa and early Gupta period. Thus the image to some extent carries forth a stage further between the Katra Bodhisattva and the Manukuar and Sarnath figures of the Buddha images.

The sculptures, referred to above, are an excellent example of the Kuṣāṇa art at Moradhvaj. This leads one to believe that the place was no less significant than Mathura or Sonkh, which are designated as the key sites of this culture.

Moradhvaj: the Terracottas (Plate III)

The terracotta art at Moradhvaj is also interesting. The excavation unearthed an assorted collection ranging from the Bodhisattvas and Maṭṭkās to human and animal figurines. A few princely figurines are interesting from the point of view of artistic decoration. A broken Bodhisattva figure with *kaṭisūtra* and lotus-like armlet (*keyūra*) exhibits full excellence of the terracotta art at Moradhvaj.

The representation of Buddha in the terracotta art is also found in a tablet (8 × 7 cm.), where he is seated in *Jñānamudrā* flanked by two attendants and accompanied by two flying *vidyādhara*s hovering in the sky (Plate IIIa). It is noteworthy that this type became very popular and hence square tablets, probably stuck all around the *stūpa* exposed this year, have been found in large numbers. The portrayal of these can be compared well with the stone sculpture of Bodhisattva described earlier.

But a most interesting representation of this period is another terracotta figure (35 × 28.5 cm.) representing Kṛṣṇa slaying the demon Keśi (*Keśi-vadha*). The depiction of Kṛṣṇa in this form is totally on the lines of mythological version as given in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, where the episode is vividly described⁵.

⁵ Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Aṃsa 5, ch. 16, 9, p. 420, Gorakhpur, 2018vs.

Kṛṣṇa (Plate IIIb) depicted in rage extends his right hand straight with an open palm indicating as if he is ready to give a slap on the horse demon, whose jaw is pierced on the left arm of the God. Such sculpture or terracotta illustrating Kṛṣṇa's early childhood pranks had become quite popular in the Kuṣāṇa period. Particular mention may be made of a sculpture in the Mathura Museum showing the demon Keśi fighting with Kṛṣṇa (Joshi 1966: 68, pl. 64). It was however an established opinion of scholars that themes relating to Kṛṣṇa came to be adopted in art as early as the 4th century A. D. (if not earlier). This terracotta from Moradhvaj on the basis of characteristic features common to some other such figures can be placed roughly in the last phase of the 1st century A. D., or more precisely in the early Kuṣāṇa period (Banerjea 1974: 62, pl. 64). Kṛṣṇa's theme continued to remain popular and a representation from Abneri belonging to the early mediaeval period nicely exhibits the Kṛṣṇa Keśi-vadha episode in a stone sculpture (Desai 1973: 131, fig. 93).

Moradhvaj also gave evidence of the cult of mother goddess as indicated by the representation of the discovery of a mother holding a child. The portrayal is interesting and similar to that found earlier at Kausambi, which was also placed in the late Kuṣāṇa period (Sharma 1950: 57, pl. XXVI B, fig. 2).

* * *

Concluding, we may sum up that the middle tract of central Himalaya, from the Tons in the west to Kali (Sharda) in the east and the Tibetan plateau consisting of the sacred mountains of Kailash–Mansarovar in the north to the foothills of Uttar Pradesh in the south, is gradually emerging historically and culturally significant and so any further investigation and results in the area will be of immense value even in relation to the archaeo–historical data of the sub–continent.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors acknowledge the help rendered by Sarvashri Vinod Nautiyal, D. L. Rajput, R. S. Rawat, B. B. S. Rawat, S. S. Negi and P. R. Semwal in the preparation of this paper. The credit of field investigations also goes to the above team of the Department.

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