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COINS FROM PACHRAHI EXCAVATION: A SITE IN SOUTH KOSALA

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Abstract:

The excavation at Pachrahi focuses some fresh light to the history and archaeology of Chhattisgarh in particular and Central India in particular. For the first time this huge number of coins especially gold coins are discovered from excavation in Chhattisgarh. The rulers like Dharanidhar Dev, Yasoraj Dev and Nakkad Dev issued their coins which are recovered for the first time here. These evidences of this period not only give the clues about the political history but also the economic condition of the then society. The rulers of this dynasty left their foot prints in the form of temples, sculptures and tanks which found from excavation at Pachrahi. So far as historical period is concerned, this site flourished from early historical to late period without any break up.

Keywords: Excavations, Pachrahi, Coins, new light, Kalachuri, Nagavamshi

Introduction

In ancient times, this Chhattisgarh region was known as Dakshin-Kosala. This area also finds mention in Ramayana and Mahabharata. Between the sixth and twelfth centuries, Sarabhpurias, Panduavanshi, Somvanshi, Kalachuri and Nagvanshi rulers dominated this region. The Ramayan itself states that after Ram, the kingdom of Kosala was divided between his two sons, Lava and Kusa. The former obtained North Kosala and ruled from Sravasti, while the latter got South Kosala and founded the city of Kusavati or Kusasthalipura near the Vindhya. In the epic Kosala/South Kosala is not included in the Dakshinapath. But the *Allahabad pillar inscription* enumerates Kosala along with the territories of the Dakshinapath and associates it with Mahakantara and the kingdoms of the Kalinga region. The traditional account of the origin of Dakshin Kosala is recorded in an unpublished manuscript, the *Kosala Khanda*.

In recent years the Directorate of Culture and Archaeology, Government of Chhattisgarh has undertaken excavations in various parts of the state. Among these excavated sites, Pachrahi holds an important position. Excavation at Pachrahi opened a new epoch in the history and archaeology of India in general and Chhattisgarh in particular. This particular site is located about 45 k.m from Kabirdham, the district headquarter. It is situated on the right bank of river Haup, a tributary of river Seonath. The excavation solved many unsolved questions of Chhattisgarh history and archaeology (Yadav & Pradhan, 2008a:50-58; Yadav and Pradhan 2008b:65-79). Among the early medieval settlement of Central India, Pachrahi holds an important position. The present excavation revealed many new facts about the early medieval history of Chhattisgarh. The Directorate of Culture and Archaeology, Government of Chhattisgarh is undertaking the excavation work at Pachrahi in the field session 2007-08 and 2008-09. A brief account of first field session work has already published in the *Puratattva No.38* (Yadav and Pradhan, 2008a:50-58).

The excavation at Pachrahi (2007-08) revealed many interesting features of Chhattisgarh History and Archaeology (Yadav and Pradhan. 2008a:59-73). The excavation at area-I yielded a house with two fortification walls. Besides one gold coin of Nakkad Dev and silver coins of Sridhar dev and large amount of Kalchuri and Islamic coins are unearthed. The main discoveries on this site were fossil, prehistoric tools of Upper Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods. Then large number household articles are traced out. The terracotta figurines are major attraction of this site.

Objectives of the Excavation

The Archaeological Survey of India was given permission for further excavation at Pachrahi. The following points are main objective of the excavation of this session :-



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- ❖ To know the settlement pattern of the site.
- ❖ To identify it was trade route or capital city.
- ❖ To fill up the vast gap from mesolithic/neolithic to post Gupta period.
- ❖ To give more focus on the formation of fortification.
- ❖ To emphasize the role of Chhattisgarh in diffusion of trade, culture, religion and ideology through the early medieval times.
- ❖ To prepare a database of various antiquities both in indigenous and other parts of the country, to have a clear understanding on the material culture of the people.
- ❖ To give a critical analysis to the archaeological objects to the religious art motifs of the site.
- ❖ To correlate the archaeological retrieval objects to other excavated sites.

In this session (2008-09) the horizontal excavation was carried out on the main mound (area-I) and area-IV in this session, Area-V was taken up for the excavation. This area - V is situated on the northern side of the area-I. This particular area is located very close to the river Haup. There are five mounds are selected for excavation. Besides one habitational complex area was also selected for operation. This particular area is divided into two parts i.e. the upper part and the lower part.

Excavation

The excavation revealed following cultural sequences which are given below.

Period-I	:	Pre Historic
Period-II	:	Post-Gupta period (Panduvansi)
Period-III	:	Kalchuri
Period-IV	:	Phani-Nagvansi
Period-V	:	Islamic

The classification of the cultural sequences are determined on the basis of findings of tools, coins, potteries. structures, art motifs, antiquities and other associated excavation materials. The comparative study of structures of early medieval period is also done here. In the field session of 2008-09, the excavation at area-I revealed a fossil from the trench. So from the nature of stratigraphy, it seems that this fossil may transported from other place. This particular excavated of Pachrahi fossil is of *Mallusca* family. In this family, we found *Harpoceras*, *Hildoceras*, *Dactylio ceras*, *Ludwigia*, *Sonninia*, and *Oppelia* (Woods 1967:326-333)

Period-I

This cultural phase is attested with the findings of tools throughout the site. From the upper two layer microliths and very few Upper Palaeolithic tools are found. The excavation was conducted on the lower part of the previous excavation area. So these prehistoric tools are found in very less number. In previous year these tools are recovered from all the stratas from humus to natural bed rock. But due to lower impression, the deposits are very deep here. The tools of microlithis are of lunate, trapze, scrapers, points etc. The raw materials are same as found from previous years. The most interesting feature here is that first time ringstones are found in association with these tools. But this tools and ringstones are found from second habitational layer. So from the nature of the site, it seems that these are in secondary context. Besides these from the humus, many debitage are found.



Period-II

During this period new features were introduced for the first time. Remains of massive square brick structure was encountered in the area-I. No written records are found in this period. This period assigned to post-Gupta period or Panduvansi (Somvansi) dynasty. This brick structure is well finished and very similar to Post-Gupta structure of *Maniyar Math* of Rajgiri, Bihhar. The scientific clearance at the mound *Kankalin Tila*, in Area-I, revealed also many plaques of Parvati, Kartikeya and other unidentified figure. These plaques are very similar to the retrieved plaques of Mallahar (Bajpai 2008:5-7). Earlier many doorjambs and sculptures of Panduvansi period are found from this site and now exhibited in the Khairagarh University museum (Sharma 1990:24-25, Jha 2007:35-38). Very few architectural and sculptural remains of this period are encountered. Such examples are unique and have been rarely reported from the site. The brick structure of this period consists two apartments and a *Pradakshinapath* on the outside. The complete plan of this brick structure could not expose because it filled up by the stone structure of period-III in outer surface. This early brick structure is encircled by a brick boundary wall on its three sides except eastern direction. From the plan of this structure, it seems that this brick structure may face towards western direction because the *Pradakshinapath* wall closed the eastern side of this structure.

This phase of period II only encountered at the mound *Kankalin Tila* and one trench. The potteries of this period are plain red ware. Some potsherds of red ware have decoration in appliqué technique and engraved lines. Some sherds have thumb impressions in prominent manner. Red slips are also applied to the pottery. The main shapes of pottery are vases, bowls and handis. Numbers of stone plaques are discovered from the *Kankalin Tila*. The discovery of a slightly broken Parvati stone plaque in reddish Khandolite datable to circa 6th/7th century A.D. is of immense archaeological importance. The ornaments and garments of this sculpture is very simple and low relief. Similar type of this sculpture was discovered from the Mallahar excavation by K.D.Bajpai and S.K. Pandey of Sagar University, Madhya Pradesh (Bajpai 2008:5-6). Besides, other two stone similar sculptures of Kartikeya and unidentified figure are traced out.

Period-III

The habitational deposit of this cultural phase was excavated in north direction of the site. This period is represented by the archaeological remains of temple structure, sculptures, inscriptions, coins and other cultural materials. The cultural deposit of this period is about 1.5m. Interestingly, an isolated discovery of a partly broken fossil was found in this cultural level. As mentioned the excavation was carried out in the northern direction of the site, which revealed the antiquities from geological times to late medieval periods.

The Temple structure

This temple structural activities are encountered in the same *Kankali Tila* of site-I. The scientific clearance at this mound revealed a base of the temple. Originally this temple is latter added in the former brick monuments. The platform (base of the *adhistan*) of this temple is constructed of massive undressed stone blocks of sand stone which are locally quarried. This temple consist *Garbhagriha* (sanctum) and a *Mandampa* (porch) in front of it. These two structures of the temple are rested on the same level. From the plan of the temple, it seems that it is a *Saptarath* in design, and facing towards east. Good numbers of stone and terracotta sculptures are traced out from this phase.

The excavations revealed three fragmented stone inscriptions. One inscription is inscribed on the lower pedestal of a fragmented image. There are three lines of letter in *Devanagri* script are inscribed. The letters are deciphered as-

Line-1: *Rank ku (mar)*

Line-2: *Deya Jal*

Line-3: *koomaga (ra)*



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Other two fragmented stone inscriptions are very small. One fragmented stone contains only three letters like *U la pu & Ro* (so) in *Devanagri* script and others are missing. The last fragmented stone contains the two line letters deciphered as :-

Line-1 *Ra sri Tikamh*

Line-2 *Ditam*

Coins

This cultural phase is very rich in the field of numismatic evidences. There are about twenty coins are discovered from excavated trenches. All these coins are retrieved from third and fourth layer of the cultural deposits.

There are about four gold coins of Kalchuri rulers are found. Two gold coin of Ratan Dev of Kalchuri dynasty is retrieved from the excavation(Pl.1a&1b). On the obverse of this gold coin *Shri Ratan Dev* in *Devnagri* script and on reverse some unidentified figure are minted. There are numbers of dots/die marks are minted on the boundary of reverse of the coin. Other two gold coins of Pratapmal Dev of Kalchuri dynasty are also traced out(Pl.2a&2b). On the obverse the name of the king '*Srimad Pratpml Dev*' in *Devnagari* script and on the reverse the figure of *Hanuamn* (?) and other unidentified figure are minted. Some scholars are giving different views about the figure of *Hanuman* of Pratapmal Dev's gold coin. But here it is mentioned that the rulers of Kalchuri dynasty issued *Hanuman* types of coins, which are of copper in metal. For the first time, this type of gold coin is traced out from excavation. Besides these gold coins, more than twenty copper coins of this Kalchuri dynasty are found from this excavated site. The coins of Jajjala Dev, Prithiv Dev, Ratan Dev etc are found. Findings of that large number of coins of this dynasty shows the strong holds at this site. For the first time the gold coins of Pratapmall Dev are retrieved from the excavation at Pachrahi.

Period-IV

The cultural period belongs to Phani-Nagvansis. This cultural phase is represented by the findings of silver coins and other sculptural and architectural motifs and structures. Earlier in this phase one gold coin of Nakkad Dev(Pl.3a&3b) and silver coins of Shri Dhar Dev are traced out (Yadav & Pradhan 2008a: 50-58). But during this session only silver coins of these rulers are found. There are about seven silver coins are retrieved from this cultural deposit. One silver coin of *Yosaraj Dev* of this dynasty was found for the first time in Chhattisgarh. Beside this two small silver coins which special mentioned. These two silver coins are found in the second layer at the depth of 45 c.m. On the obverse a symbol (?) and the name *Dev* in *Devnagari* script is minted and on the reverse two highly projected dots and four small projected dots are minted. Prof. C.S.Gupt identified these coins are of Paramar dynasty of Central India. But the above discussed types of rare coin are also found for the first time in this state now the study is going on to identify these coins.

The scientific clearance at area-IV yielded a huge temple complex. Earlier the excavation yielded only a *Sanctum* of the temple (Yadav and Pradhan 2008a:50-58). In this session, it is noticed that a long high impression mound is going towards western direction from the excavated temple remains. So the scientific clearance is carried out in area-IV/very near to the temple. This mission revealed another three structures which are likely saivite in nature. Because a small shrine is found this is very close to the earlier excavated temple. This small shrine contains a *Sivling* with *Jalhari* which is found intact. A large number of fragmented sculptures are found in this cultural phase. These sculptures are made up of sand stone. One sculpture of Uma-Maheshwar is found from excavation. Number of iron implements and copper objects are traced out. A huge amount of spinning implements is found. Spinning is done with most simple implement, which has not changed much as known so far (Gupta and Pathak 2008:136-149). There are large number spindle whorls are found from surface and also from excavation. Two implements of this type are also encountered in the survey with ringstones and Mesolithic tools. This type of implements are also found from Neolithic site (Sharma 1982:23), to early late historical sites also (Gupta & Pathak 2008:136-149). The retrieved spindle whorls are various size and a single whole in the middle.



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Evidences of the Phani-Nagvansi dynasty found so far (before Excavation)

- One fragmented stone inscription found from Mandwa Mahal, Kawardha, Chhattisgarh.
- Two image inscriptions of Bhoramdev and Sahaspur, Kabirdham district, Chhattisgarh.
- One name Gopal Dev of type dynasty is found in Kalchuri inscriptions. But scholars area not giving satisfactory answers.

The Phani-Nagvansi : The Dark Age ?

Besides these fragmented stone inscriptions, no coins and settlements pattern of this particular dynasty are traced out in Chhattisgarh. So this dynasty is known as *Dark Age* in Chhattisgarh history. The fragmented stone inscription of Mandwa Mahal, dist Kabirdham recorded mainly the genealogy of this dynasty. (Sharma 1990:40, Jain 2005:30-31). The rullers are i.e. i)Ahiraj ii)Rajalla, ii) *Dharanidhar*, iv) Mahimdev, v) Saktichandra, vi) Gopaldev, vii) Naldev, viii) Bhuvanpal, ix) Kirtipal, x) Jaytrapal, xi) Mahipal, xii)Visampal, xiii) Janhu, xiv)Janpal, xv) *Yasoraj*, xvi) *Kannad dev (Nakkad dev)*, xvii) Laxmiverma, xviii) Khadga Deo xix) Bhuvanaikamalla, xx) Arjun, xxi) Bhim, xxii) Bhoj, xxiii)Laxman, xxiv) Ramchandra, xxv)Arjun.

New Evidences from excavation

For the first time the excavation revealed more than ten coins of gold and silver. One gold coin of Nakkad Dev and three silver coins are of Shridha Dev (*Dharanidhar* ?) are found. Two silver coins of Yasoraj Dev are also traced out. If we compare these coins to the genealogy, which described in inscription of Mandwa Mahal, some fresh light shed on the history of Chhattisgarh. The gold coin of Nakkad dev is described as the 16th ruler of this dynasty where as Yasoraj Dev and Dharanidhar Dev are the fifteenth and third ruler of this dynasty respectively. Besides these the settlement pattern and other antiquities of this cultural phase are also discovered from the excavation. So the term, '*Dark Age*' for Phani-Nagvansi in Chhattisgarh history is no more. The fresh evidences from excavation opened a new chapter in the Indian history in general and Chhattisgarh history in particular.

Period-V

This cultural phase is demarcated by the findings of coins. In this session more than five coins are found from the excavation. Two copper coins of Alauddin Khilji are found. The overse side contains the tile of the Sultan as *As-Sultan-Ul-Azam Alaul-Dunyawad-Din* in Arabic and on the reverse and the reverse side contains *Shri Sultan Alawadin* in *Nagari* version, and date in *Nagari* figures: 708 being the date of striking of the coin in *Hijri* era which corresponds to 1308-09 A.D. (Khwaja 2009:107-108). Other coins are in process of decipherment. Besides this one silver coin of British period (Pre- independence) is traced out from the humus layer. So it indicates that the site might be used during that time.

Discussion

The excavation at Pachrahi focuses some fresh light to the history and archaeology of Chhattisgarh. For the first time this huge amount of coins especially gold coins are discovered from excavation in Chhattisgarh. This is the first site in Chhattisgarh where such huge amount Upper Paleolithic and Mesolithic tools are traced out so far. The Maikal hill provides raw materials for tools where as the river Haup provides a clear cut settlement for early man in this region. The remarkable discovery from the excavation is the fossil which shows the geological time scale of these region. The period-II which assigned Post-Gupta period (Panduvansi), is marked by the structural activities and sculptural motifs. For the first time two gold coins of Pratapmal Dev of Kalchuri dynasty is found, and one gold coin of Ratan Dev clearly indicate that this site served as an important centre during that period.



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The fourth period is attested by the findings of a number of coins of this dynasty. The rulers like Dharanidhar Dev, Yasoraj Dev and Nakkad Dev issued their coins which are recovered for the first time here. These evidences of this period not only give the clues about the political history but also the economic condition of the then society. The rulers of this dynasty left their foot prints in the form of temples, sculptures and tanks which found from excavation at Pachrahi. So far as historical period is concerned, this site flourished from early historical to late period without any break up.

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Plate.1a. Gold coin of Ratan dev, Kalachuri period



Plate.1b. Gold coin of Ratan dev, Kalachuri period (reverse)



Plate.2a. Gold coin of Pratapmalladev, Kalachuri period



Plate.2b. Gold coin of Pratapmalladev, Kalachuri period (reverse)



Plate.3a. Gold coin of Nakkad dev (Obverse)



Plate.3b. Gold coin of Nakkad dev (reverse)