
A Brief Study of Archaeological Localities in Dari Block of Hazaribagh District, Jharkhand

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Abstract: This paper is a report of field work conducted by the author in the region of Dari block of Hazaribagh area. It provides brief information about few archaeological localities, clustered in the proximity of each other, comprises prehistoric localities, megaliths and rock art. Rock art site is previously reported by few scholars from Binova Bhave University of Hazaribagh, but very less information is published in their paper regarding other archaeological evidence in its proximity. During the last phase of 20th century, R.K. Chattopadhyay have surveyed and reported few Palaeolithic sites around this region, which are now comes under adjacent Ramgarh district. Subsequently, Chakrabarti and Lahiri have also surveyed and reported few middle Palaeolithic localities in Hazaribagh area. Later on, few more rock art, Palaeolithic and Megalithic localities are reported by different scholars, but away from the area of study of this paper. The paper is an attempt to understand the archaeological wealth of the area and to fill the gap of research during the previous studies, which could bridge between Palaeolithic sites, earlier reported by different researchers, scholars and members of INTACH and IGNCA.

Keywords: Hazaribagh, Prehistoric Research, Rock Art, Megaliths, Buddhism, Iron Smelting, Cultural Continuity

Introduction

The region of Hazaribagh became a promising area for archaeological research in recent years, since discovery of several archaeological sites and few excavations. Besides this, it is a very less explored area for prehistoric research, but well known for rock art, megaliths, few Buddhist centres and sculptural remains of Jain, Buddhism and Brahmanical religion. The area of Dari Block is the most untouched region for archaeological studies; accept a single report of the rock art and megalithic site mentioned in this paper.

Study Area and Previous Works

Geology of the area is represented by the sandstone formation and some patches of granite gneiss. It is shaded by the rivulets and tributaries of Damodar River and densely forested by the protected and reserved forest of Saal, Mohua, Tun, Amaltas, Sagwaan, Karam and many more local vegetation of Jharkhand. It is very rich in coal

mining and surrounded by several open cast mines of coal, such as, Sayal, Giddi, Urimari, etc. Approximately 5 kms of area is surveyed during the field work (Figure 1).

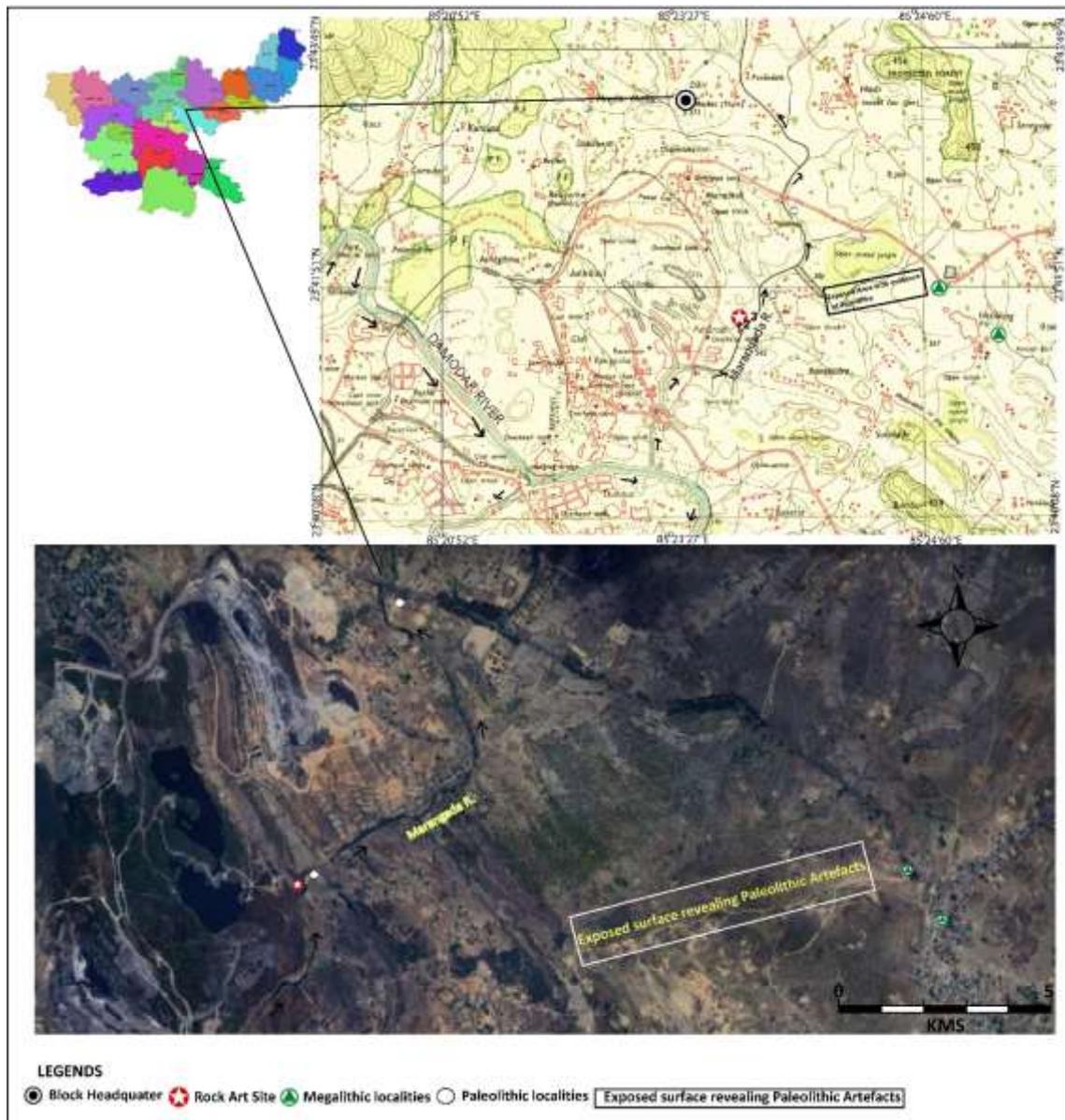


Figure 1: Topographic and satellite imagery of the study area in map of Jharkhand

The region is quite close to the area, from where R. K. Chattopadhyay and later D.K. Chakrabarti have reported few middle Palaeolithic localities in year 1987 and 1993, respectively (Chattopadhyay 1987: 197- 201; Chakrabarti 1993: 29- 44). Some localities with Palaeolithic remains, rock art, megaliths and Iron smelting localities are reported by the team of Prehistoric Branch, Nagpur, Archaeological Survey of India, led by Dr. S.B. Ota (IAR 1994- 95: 3-5), Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (Imam 2007; 2014), Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts and scholars like, Neumayor and Chakraborty in the vicinity of the present area of survey (Neumayor 1995: 80- 83; Imam 1995 and Chakraborty 1996: 74- 99). Besides all these, few rock art and microlithic

localities are recently surveyed by the author of this paper in adjacent Barkagaon block of Hazaribagh (Shekhar 2022a: 92- 113).



Figure 2: Cluster of megaliths at locality I of Hesalong megalithic site

Previous work on sites undertaken for study in this paper is conducted by Professor B.K. Mohanta and Ganganath Jha, who have reported the rock art site of *Lekhni Gupha*, 3.4 kilometres west from the megalithic site (Mohanta and Jha 2014: 92- 96). They have mention about different figures painted in the shelter and reported the Megalithic site of Hesalong, but the work lacks detail study. Besides this, the paper also lacks thorough archaeological survey of surrounding of both rock art and megalithic localities, having potential prehistoric evidence. Subhashish Das, a freelance researcher of megalithic astronomy, have later worked on the megalithic site through astronomical point of view (Das 2018). The author of this paper has surveyed the region again during the field work undertaken for his doctoral research and the results are given in this paper.

Present Work and Its Aims

The present work aims towards complete and thorough archaeological survey from different localities of Megalithic site of Hesalong till the rock art site. The work is conducted for the soul aim to find out the archaeological potential of the area spread in 5 kms area.



Figure 3: Evidence of Paleolithic tools in rain gullies in close proximity of Megalithic and Rock Art sites

Methodology Adopted

The methodology adopted for the documentation of the sites is a foot survey in the area and basic photographic documentation of different archaeological localities. On site documentation of antiquities and cultural materials over the surface without disturbing the context is done so that the evidence remains *in situ* for further scope of research. GPS co-ordinates of each site and locality are also recorded through Garmin Etrex 10. The field work resulted as fruitful evidence of archaeological potential of the area under survey as complete documentation of megalithic localities, rock art site and prehistoric localities was done and some traces of iron smelting activities are also observed in the vicinity of the site.

Megalithic Site

Megalithic site (23°41'51''N, 85°24'60'') has two different localities with evidence of menhirs and capstones. Locality I has cluster of both these types on small and roughly circular elevated area with evidence of numerous over the capstones. Two menhirs are raised in the centre of the site and it is surrounded by stone slabs or capstones. A fallen menhir is also found 100 west to the main cluster which have evidence of worship marks over it suggest some sort of continuity of worship at the site. Similar evidence was recorded at Locality II, towards the south east, around a kilometre away, within the modern settlement. It has two tilted menhirs with the evidence of worship marks (Figure 2).



Figure 4: Scatters of microlithic debitage, exposed on the surface due to anthropogenic activities

Megalithic locality II with evidence of ritual marks over tilted menhirs inside the village Hesalong, on the right side of a village street. It suggests that some cultural continuity is still going on the site, where local people occasionally worship the stones. It has also been observed at locality I, where worship marks are found on the fallen menhir.

Prehistoric Localities with Scatters of Stone Tools

Palaeolithic artefacts are found westward from Hesalong Megalithic site, from exposed barren land (23°41'74''N; 85°24'50''E), showing sandy pebbly gravel exposures, through rain gullies. These rain gullies have evidence of flakes, debitage and broken and worked pebbles and cobbles. Some complete tools like small size hand axes and

flaked tools, made on prepared core technique indicate a middle Palaeolithic tools industry (Figure 3). Another locality at further west and close to the River Marangada, a rivulet of Damodar River have evidence of microlithic debitage found exposed over the surface and in sections of a trench, cut by a local inhabitant for construction of boundary wall of the house. These debitage are made on quartzite and quartz (23°41'38"N; 85°24'20"E) (Figure 4). Raw materials of the stone tools exposed over the surface and the section of localities are represented by different types of quartz, quartzite, quartzitic sandstone, etc., which are locally available and a section exposed by JCB machine on the River bank, indicate abundance of cobbles, pebbles, core, flakes and debitage at one of the localities (23°42' 27"N; 85°23'43"E), which is very close to rock shelters, across the River (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Deposit of raw material in the section cut down by JCB machine on the opposite site of River

Rock Shelters and Paintings

There are three rock shelters (23°41'49"N; 85°23'29"E) at left bank of Marangada River, can be named as RS1, RS2 and RS3, facing towards east. RS1 has paintings but other two shelters are devoid of any rock art. All three shelters are located adjacent to an open cast coal mine. Rock shelter I, locally known as *Lekhni gupha*, has average dimension of approx. 12 x14 x 8 meters and it has three panels and two of them are painted with different paintings (Figure 6). Paintings are depicted by using White colour extracted from Kaolin, Red from Haematite, Yellow from Limonite and Black pigments from manganese oxide, all are locally available minerals. Colours are still extracted by the local inhabitants during the festive and marriage occasions for painting and decoration their houses (Shekhar *et al* 2019: 609- 621; Shekhar 2022a: 92-113; 2022c: 84- 91).



Figure 6: General view of rock shelter from the opposite side of Marangada River



Figure 7: General view of Panel 1 showing paintings at the upper portion of weathered sandstone surface of Lekhni Gupha



Figure 8: General View of Panel 2 in the central portion of the wall showing floral design, animal figures and geometric symbols made on red and white colors



Figure 9: View of a meander of Marangada River from the roof of Lekhani Gupha, showing localities of tools (inset) found in the proximity

Panel 1

Panels are counted from viewer's left to right. Panel 1 has nine different paintings, representing different geometrical shapes as decorated shield shape pattern having six concentric circles internally decorated wavy design and six studs at the center. It also

has two swords like weapon going across behind the circular pattern. Other figures are square shape filled with decoration of multiple arch patterns on all sides, rectangular pattern filled with interwoven designs of lines, a rectangular pattern filled with decorations at inner profile and outside the border, faded geometric decorations at lower portion and animal figures within a rectangle; a decorated turtle and another turtle superimposed by a crab are depicted at the upper portion of the panel (Figure 7). Besides paintings, a small cupule is also found on a slab over the surface of rock shelter.

Panel 2

It is a central panel having 12 different paintings from lower to upper portion. Most of the paintings are at upper portion, represented by four faded geometric patterns, a geometric pattern in proximity of a cattle figure in the middle, a group of anthropomorphic figures facing an animal, which is moving viewer's right to left are depicted opposite to each others, painted in white and decorated geometric decoration at lower portion. Few faded geometric decorations can be seen by careful observation in lower portion of the panel. One faded geometric figure made by red color has an anthropomorphic figure inside (Figure 8).

Theme and Subject Matter

The subject of rock painting is different animals, such as deer, bull, crab and tortoise, stick shape human figures, abstract paintings and geometric designs. Some paintings resemble Bones arranged in rectangular pattern and intersecting it in the middle; perhaps related to some sort of shamanistic ritual. Besides all these, few floral designs are also painted in white colour.

Associated Cultural Materials

Some scattered evidence of microlithic debitage are found from surface of rock shelters. Besides this, a broken Neolithic tool made on dolerite is also found at close proximity of rock art site. A small size cleaver is found on the sand bar at River bank, close to the rock shelter. Evidence of prehistoric localities near the shelter indicates that Palaeolithic man perhaps use this shelter for some sort of activities, as, hunting and as temporary shelters (Figure 9).

Cultural Continuity at Rock Shelters

Continuity of religious activities can be observed in the rock shelters, as locals treat them as a sacred place. Some old ceramics of red ware are also been found on a stone block in rock shelter II and III. Even some people also assigned this place for the worship of *Naagdevta*, as they have seen a snake inside a shelter in past. Besides this, animistic nature of local religion in Jharkhand can be an important factor involve behind such sort of belief system. Natural elements have sacred importance among the population, who believes in animism and tribal population of Jharkhand belief in animism. Even worship marks are found on both rock art and megalithic site, indicate some sort of ethnographic belief towards these sites.

Role of C- transform and N- transform Over Archaeological Sites

Cultural activities and natural processes are two main agencies responsible for transformation of archaeological sites, better described as agencies of C-transform and N- transform by Michael Schiffer (Schiffer 1987). Such factors are evident in form of tuning the area into open cast coal mines, house building and other industrial activities, destroying the Palaeolithic localities and creating a threat to the rock art site. Cultural activities in rock shelters are responsible for destruction of rock art and archaeological context of the rock shelter. Effect of coal mines can be observed over the surface of rock shelter which is responsible for heavy damage of most of the paintings. Besides this, quarry of stones and coal deposit in proximity of rock shelter and river banks are also causing destruction of Palaeolithic localities.

Natural agencies, for instance, weathering of sandstone is an important of poor state of preservation of the paintings as many of them are faded and difficult to interpret even after enhancing on Photoshop and by the help of photograph enhancing software, as Image J and D- stretch. Due to such reason most portion of the shelter is heavily destroyed and it is difficult to find many paintings even after careful observation.

Discussion

All these archaeological localities, mentioned in this paper are very close to other reported Palaeolithic and rock art sites. In year 1987, Chattopadhyay has reported few very important middle Palaeolithic sites, such as Gola, Kusumdih, Hesagarha, Mandu and Barkagaon, in area of Ramgarh and Hazaribagh districts, where, he has found small size hand axes and flake tools, such as, scrapers, discoids, retouched flakes and blades of quartzite and quartz, made on prepared core (Chattopadhyay 1987: 197- 201; Chakrabarti 1993: 29- 44). The prehistoric localities mentioned in this paper are located approx. 25 kms away from those sites reported by them. Similar artefacts have been observed on the surface of prehistoric localities, though, artefacts are just documented *in situ* only, and not collected from sites, keeping the future scope of research in mind. The archaeological wealth of the surrounding area can be understood by earlier discoveries by different scholars and researchers, with antiquities from Palaeolithic to Megalithic phase along with rich evidence of rock art and middle Palaeolithic to microlithic industry (Neumayor 1995; Chakraborty 1996: 74- 99; Shekhar 2022a: 92- 113). Although, sites mentioned in this paper are rapidly destroying due to natural and cultural agencies, the area is important for the further archaeological study by scholars.

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