
Megalithic Studies in Nagpur Division: Contributions of Colonial Period

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Abstract: *The region of Vidarbha, eastern Maharashtra, India has a very rich archaeological legacy from prehistoric to medieval period. The British officials who were stationed near or around Nagpur Division endeavored to look into the archaeological problems of the region. The megalithic monuments attracted the British the most. In this pursuit they explored, excavated, documented many sites and analyzed the data. This paper attempts to overview these efforts and contributions (especially megalithic studies) made by British officials and others during colonial times in the Nagpur province/Vidarbha region. In the absence of any organized archaeological body/institute, the contribution of these individuals, irrespective of their official holdings, is immense as far as Vidarbha Megalithic studies are concerned.*

Keywords: Vidarbha, Nagpur Division, Maharashtra, Megalithic, Archaeological Survey of India, Colonial Period, British Officials

Introduction

The Archaeological Survey of India, established in 1871 (the first archaeological survey took place in 1861), initiated more and more organized archaeological campaigns (for more details Chakrabarti, 1988; Singh, 2004) throughout the country at the beginning of second half of nineteenth century. However, it is the contribution also made by amateur archaeologist, such as British officials, missionaries, travelers, etc., in the form of excavations, explorations, monument recording and conservation, publications and administrative measures (making laws or creating funds for archaeological activities) etc., that led to the establishment of archaeology as one of the important discipline of research of the past in the country. Keeping this in mind, this paper is an effort to review and acknowledge the archaeological works undertaken by several such amateur archaeologists in Nagpur Division, formerly part of Central Province that lies in the eastern part of the present state of Maharashtra (popularly known as Vidarbha) India, during colonial period. In several ways their work was seminal, especially in the light of the minimum resources they utilized, minimum technical know-how and in an absence of a well-defined set of aims, objectives and methodology in archaeology that was at its embryonic stage, it constituted the basis for future archaeological research in

this region. Even though for some, their work may just form a part of antiquarianism, but a careful reading of their publications displays vigilant observations and significant conclusions that cannot be relegated.

During pre-independence period, Nagpur was annexed by British in 1853, and soon became part of Central Province in 1861, including Saugor (Sagar) and Nerbudda (Narmada) territories. Nagpur division included Chanda (Chandrapur), Bhandara, Chhindawada, and Raipur. After independence Central Province and Berar (Amravati Division) became a new state of Madhya Pradesh. The Indian states were reorganized along linguistic lines in 1956 and on Nov. 1 Nagpur and Amravati division were transferred to Bombay state while Balaghat district remained in Madhya Pradesh. Bombay state became Maharashtra state in 1960 (see, Maharashtra State Gazetteers, Nagpur District, 1971).

The Beginning

As far as Vidarbha is considered, what attracted colonial researchers and British officials (stationed around Nagpur) the most were the Megalithic circles! For them, these circles were the cultural display of some unknown mystery in time. For some, these stone circles (often mentioned in early literature as barrows) at Nagpur and surrounding landscape resembled prehistoric sites such as Stonehenge, Avebury, and Carnac in England and Brittany in France. This similarity must have made these stone circles even more appealing to British officials and others working in India at that time. As far as individual contributions to archaeology, especially explorations and excavations of Megalithic sites in Nagpur (during the colonial period) are concerned, the contribution of Rev. S. Hislop, J.H. Rivett-Carnac, G. G. Pearse and J.J. Carey are significant.

Rev. S. Hislop

Rev. Stephen Hislop (Scottish Missionary) (Fig. 1) was attracted to missionary work while acting as a secretary to 'Ladies' Society for Female Education' in India and subsequently in 1844 he sailed to India (see for details, Smith, 1888). He was a well-known evangelist, educationist (In May 1846, Hislop (1817-1863) opened a school at Nagpur, which has grown into the present Hislop College) and an eminent geologist and had contributed especially to geological researches carried out in the Nagpur area (Hislop, 1861a, 1861b). Apart from his extensive geological research, he also excavated a stone circle near Nagpur. As early as 1847 Hislop noticed megalithic circles at Takalaghat, however it was in 1849-50 that he carried out major explorations and found almost ninety circles. The Raja of Nagpur gave permission for excavations, however the village headman refused to supply paid labors, and therefore the missionaries and native Christians themselves excavated (Smith, 1888, p. 207). The details of this excavation were published in the form of a letter in 1857 in the *Journal of Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society*. In the letter, Hislop gave a short description about the excavations at Takalaghat and the general abundance of burial remains within the Nagpur division:

[...] Several years ago I dug it out of a Scythian stone-circle, at Takalghat, 20 miles S. of Nagpur. When it was brought to light, at the height of about half an inch from the bottom it was covered over with fragments of pottery fitted to each other so as to form a kind of mosaic work, evidently to protect the ashes which were deposited in it. In the same cairn were found a spear-head, a piece of iron like a large knife or hatchet, nail, &c. At Takalghat there is a wide field for the antiquary. Indeed the country all round abounds in Scythian remains, but it would require a person with much leisure for their investigation. I am acquainted with about twenty localities where there are circles, and eight villages where there are kistvaens in this district (Hislop, 1857, p. 671-72).

This is the earliest known attempt at investigating the antiquarian history of Vidarbha (then Central province and Berar). What is important is the mention of Scythian stone-circles, which indicate a contemporary understanding about them (Scythian origin of stone circle) (Russell, 1908, p. 25; Begbie, 1909, p. 59-60). In the Wardha Settlement Report, Hislop describes the stone circles around Nagpur as:

The vestiges of an ancient Scythian race in this part of India are very numerous. They are found chiefly as barrows surrounded by a circle of stones, and as stone boxes, which when complete are styled kistvaens, and when open on one side cromlechs. The kistvaens if not previously disturbed have been found to contain stone coffins and urns (cited in Russell, 1908 p, 25).

The academic career of Rev. Hislop came to an end abruptly due to his unfortunate death in 1863. He was drowned in the Bori river in the vicinity of Takalaghat (same site he excavated) while conducting an exploration, accompanied by Sir Richard Temple, the then Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces.

Besides geological and archaeological investigations, Rev. Hislop, also conducted some ethnographic work on aboriginals in Central Provinces and wrote few papers, but unfortunately, due to his premature death he could not publish this work. Later, Sir Richard Temple edited and published Hislop's work in 1866, entitled '*Papers Relating to the Aboriginal Tribes of the Central Provinces*' (publishers name is not printed on the book). This work basically deals with the various tribes in Central India, viz., Gonds, Padal, Dholi, Ojhya, Thotyal, etc. It deals with general information of these aboriginal tribes, such as physical appearance, birth and death ceremonies, marriage, food habits, religion, dressing, social position, occupation, villages, etc.; however, this work more elaborately focused on the tribe of Gonds. Being the first archaeological investigator, Rev. Hislop holds an important place in the history of archaeology of Nagpur Division (for details see biography, Smith, 1888).

J.H. Rivett-Carnac

The first well documented exploration and excavation in the Vidarbha region goes back to 1867 undertaken by J.H. Rivett-Carnac (1838-1923), Alfred Lyall, and Blanford (spelt as Blandford by Leshnik, 1970) at the site of Junapani (Nagpur division). John Henry Rivett-Carnac (Fig. 2) was in the Bengal Civil Service (also was cousin of Sir

Richard Temple). Alfred Lyall (1835-1911) was appointed as District manager of Nagpur in 1864 and later as Commissioner of Berar in 1867, and Blanford, mentioned above, was from the Geological Survey of India. The first name is not mentioned; perhaps he is the same Henry Francis Blanford (1834-1893) who joined the Geological Survey of India in 1855 and later Presidency College of Calcutta. H.F. Blanford was also the first chief reporter of India Meteorological Department (IMD) (for contemporary political condition see, Rivett-Carnac, 1910).



Figure 1: Rev. Stephen Hislop (Source: http://www.snipview.com/q/Stephen_Hislop)



Figure 2: J.H. Rivett-Carnac (Source: Rivett-Carnac 1910)

A rough map based on their survey was prepared by Rivett-Carnac indicating locations of various barrows near Junapani. The 'barrow' (term used for 'stone-circle') at Junapani was excavated by them in January 1867. They recovered various iron implements such as arrowhead, spearhead, axes, snaffle bit, iron razor, knife/dagger, etc. (Rivett-Carnac, 1879, p. 1-16). According to Rivett-Carnac's account, stone circles in the vicinity of Nagpur were explored by Colonel C.L.R. Glasfurd (Deputy Commissioner of Chanda district, modern Chandrapur). No other details are available about these explorations. Major G.G. Pearse, and Mr. J. J. Carey while Rev. Hislop, Mr. Hanna and Mr. Henry Dangerfield explored and excavated the stone circles at Junapani (no details are available about these surveys and excavations) (Rivett-Carnac, 1879, p. 2). The importance of this paper was that, it had elaborately highlighted the similarities between the barrows in India and the barrows in Europe (Rivett-Carnac, 1879, p. 11-14). Similarly for the first time he had discussed the 'cup-marks' on megalithic structures in detail (Rivett-Carnac, 1879, p. 14-16; 1903, p. 517-543). In his

memoir, Rivett-Carnac fondly mentions, 'In early days at Nagpore, my friend Mr Stephen Hislop, the distinguished missionary, had drawn my attention to certain marks on the great stones surrounding the prehistoric tumuli found in several parts of Central India. These are marks hollowed out on the surface of the stone, apparently with some blunt implement. To my amazement, I found markings of almost exactly similar description on some rocks on the moor not far from Alnwick.' (Rivett-Carnac, 1910, p. 268).

G. G. Pearse

George Godfrey Pearse (1827-1905) entered the Madras Artillery as second lieutenant in June, 1845. Apart from his military achievements, he also showed a distinct dedication to the collection, preservation and interpretation of gems and coins collected in India. Pearse published his collection of gems (mostly from North India), which is better known as the Pearse Collection (Indian Museum), entitled *Catalogue Raisonne* (For brief information on the career of G. G. Pearse, see, Hargreaves, 1933, p. 133-134).

The year 1867 proved important as Rivett-Carnac's excavation in January 1867 was followed by Major G. G. Pearse's (of the Royal Artillery) excavation at the site of Wurreegaon (one mile from Kamptee, Nagpur district) in July 1867. However, unlike Rivett-Carnac who published the details of his work in 1879, Pearse published the details of the excavations immediately in *The Journal of the Ethnological Society of London* in the year 1869 (Pearse, 1869, p. 207-217). Perhaps this paper is the best example of detailed descriptions and excellent observations at a time when not much information was available about proper methodology in the excavation of stone circles in archaeology. During the excavation, he came across vessels of black and brown (probably Black-and-Red ware, characteristic megalithic pottery), and black colour. The black vessels had covers with a cone-like top. He also found some husks of coconut shells. An interesting description of human remains from excavation is also mentioned. Other important antiquities reported were iron steel-tipped ploughshare-ends, lid of copper vessels (having figures of geese, snake and bird on it), spoons, knives, a spatula, a frying pan, a ring of gold and a little copper ornament having figures of geese decorating its (lid?).

The iron implements recovered from Wurreegaon (Kamptee) excavations are kept in the British Museum at London. While discussing the history of iron in India and its development, Chakrabarti (1976a, p. 114-115) has highlighted the iron finding from Wurreegaon (Kamptee) as one of the important earliest archaeological findings related to iron in Indian history. The implements recovered from Junapani and Kamptee (Wureegaon) excavations are discussed by L. Leshnik (1970, p. 498-511) in details.

J.J. Carey

J.J. Carey, Executive Engineer, Khangaon, excavated a few stone circles at Khaiwarra (modern Khairwada, also spelt as - Khywarree by Rivett-Carnac) 24 km west of Arvi in

District Wardha, probably in 1869. Each stone circle was called a 'mound' by Carey and around one hundred and fifty such mounds (!) were documented by him. Some of the observations are very interesting to note (Carey, 1871, p. 238-39):

The stone circles lately found by me near the village of Khaiwarra, about 10 miles east of Arvi in the Wardah district, were opened by desire of Mr. Morris, chief Commissioner, Central Provinces. [...] The mounds in every case were hollow at the top, making me think that a chamber would be found underneath, that the stones forming the ceiling had probably given away; but, on opening two, nothing was found to guarantee such an idea. [...]

I commenced digging operation on the principal mound in the place, 40 x 43 in diameter, [...] Nothing but loose stones and earth was removed, until about 15 inches from the surface broken red pottery began to show on the south side. [...]

[...] I saw a "find," and immediately jumped into the hole, and with the greatest care dug out of the clay, well cemented together, two copper bells, two round copper (in my opinion) ear-rings, and an iron-axe [...] this and a few iron implements and a gold ring were the only things found. The excavation was carried down about 2.6 feet.

In the other we went down over three feet from the surface [...] The only implement in good preservation was a kind of saucer for holding oil, which had a handle with a hook to hang by, and a spiral spring, which must I think have been wound round a stick.

This short description about the excavation does not reveal excavators view on the authorship of these structures or any other related aspects.

C.L.R. Glasfurd

Lieutenant-Colonel C.L.R. Glasfurd was deputy commissioner (May 1872 to June 1872 and December 1873 to April 1875) of Chanda district (modern Chandrapur district) (formerly known as the Upper Godavari district) (Begbie, 1909, p. xxii). There is mention of an instance when Captain Glasfurd sent some relics dug out of kistvaens in the Albaka taluka of Sironcha tehsil (presently forms part of Gadchiroli district) of Berar to Rev. Hislop. It seems that the excavation was carried out by Glasfurd; however no details (year is also unknown) are available about this excavation. Only the following comment of Rev. Hislop on the excavated material is available (cited in Begbie, 1909, p. 60):

'With reference to these remains I may state that the vestiges of an ancient Scythian raid in this part of India are very numerous. They are found chiefly as barrows, surrounded with a circle of stones, which when complete are styled kistvaens, and when open on one side, cromlechs. The cromlechs are now found empty. The kistvaens, if they have been disturbed, contain stone coffins, urns, etc. The tumuli are also rich in antiquities.'

The establishment of Archaeological Survey of India in 1871 perhaps was the reason that refrained individual level excavations, as we do not get any references about it

thereafter. The organized explorations made their way into the Berar region during 1870's; large-scale explorations were carried out by the Archaeological Survey Department under Cunningham and his assistants all over the Indian subcontinent.

Alexander Cunningham

Alexander Cunningham carried out archaeological tours in 1873-74 and 74-75 covering the entire Central Provinces. In the course of his survey he explored Chanda (modern Chandrapur district) and the surrounding area wherein he reported various historical sites such as, Bhandak and its temple and cave complexes, caves at Dewalwara, temples and other structural remains at Chanda, temples at Markandi, etc. Interestingly Cunningham also recorded two cromlechs or dolmens at the site of Keljhar, near Chanda (Cunningham, 1966, reprint, p. 121-160). This reference becomes important since Cunningham had otherwise not shown much interest in megalithic structures during his various campaigns elsewhere.

Henry Cousens

During the years 1892-93-94 Henry Cousens collected data regarding monuments, ancient sites and temples of Central provinces and Berar (Cousens, 1971, reprint). He mentioned various stone circle and menhir sites in Vidarbha, such as, Borgaon, Digras, Ghorar and Kohali, Junapani, Nildoh, Takalghat, Wathora, Charmursi, Keljhar, Wagnak, Sironcha, Pipalgaon and Telota Khairi (Cousens, 1971, p. 3-24). What he mentions about stone circle is interesting (Cousens, 1971, p. 5):

These circles are of great age. No one can now say exactly what they are but it is commonly believed that they mark the site of temporary encampments of the Gavalis, or pastoral tribes who wandered from place to place with their cattle. Others say that such places were formerly used for interring dead bodies. Sometime iron nails and tools are found beneath the stones. Possibly they are of Scythian origin.

G.A.P. Hunter

Hunter published an article reporting Megalithic and Early Historic findings from Mahurjhari (Mahurziri – as spelt by Hunter) (Hunter, 1933, p. 30-35). Hunter's article primarily reports Early Historic antiquities from Mahurjhari, such as, bricks, seal with a box-headed script of the Gupta-Vakataka period, carnelian seal with the letters reading 'apumada' or 'apramada', an intaglio in Vakataka characters, a seal in rock-crystal and a 'Naga' seal. He also reported finds of a Lajja-gauri plaque and beads, made of a variety of semi-precious stones. However the first two pages of article briefly describes stone circles at Mahurjhari.

He observed, 'In Nagpur district one or more stones in most circles are cup-marked. Cup marks are also found abundantly independent of stone circles. [...] To what race and what period these stone circle and cup-marks belong we do not yet know. While some may go back to remote antiquity, others are probably quite modern.' (Hunter 1933, p. 31).

Discussion and Observations

The first to study megalithic monuments in India in detail perhaps was J. Babington (1823) who explored and studied the megaliths at Malabar as early as 1819. Henceforth, numerous studies were carried out by scholars in various parts of India during colonial period, few to name, Congreve (1844-45), Taylor (1851, 1853), Carlleyle (1878, reprint, 1966), Fawcett (1890), Rea (1910-11), Longhurst (1911-12), Cammaide (1930), Codrington (1930), Wheeler (1947-48). A few studies managed to get attention of modern scholars but others could not. Following paragraphs endeavors to highlight importance of early archaeological works carried out in Nagpur region.

Megalithic Studies in India: Influence of Contemporary Anglo-European Studies and Other Factors

The megalithic monuments, which are profuse in South India, have a great resemblance with prehistoric barrows found around Stonehenge in England which made these monuments curious research subject for the British. However, most of the early studies on megaliths by British officials and others were concentrated in Madras and Nagpur regions. Both the places were important camps/centers of military and administrative activities during the colonial period, and possibly, therefore these areas were thoroughly explored. Nagpur was the capital of Central Provinces; perhaps the officials who were stationed there developed an interest in these apparently distinct prehistoric monuments, in terms of its visible appearance as well as its unfamiliar nature in contemporary regional cultural context. This must have created interest among officials and others about the antiquity and origin of the Megaliths, which led them to explore and to excavate these intriguing aspects of local culture. This can be very well attested if we see the publications of this period on archaeology.

Rivett-Carnac's publications (1879, 1910) reveal the contemporary academic scenario, as it was important to understand the archaeological development in India and outside world and their interconnections. Rivett-Carnac was aware of the developments happening in the field of archaeology outside India, as he was the fellow of various prestigious academic institutes, such as University of Bombay, Society of Antiquaries, Royal Asiatic Society, and Geological Society. Rivett-Carnac mentioned that when he paid a visit to the Museum at St. Germainen-Laye, France, he noted the resemblance between the remains, 'dug out of tumuli in Brittany and other parts of France, and the contents of the Nagpore barrows' (Rivett-Carnac 1879, p. 1). Rivett-Carnac's paper shows a very deep analytical approach as it covers observation on important aspects of megalithic studies, such as similarities in Indian and European megaliths, findings in megaliths, cup marks on megaliths, etc. Adding to this, he was also in correspondence with John Lubbock who published a very significant book *Prehistoric Times* in 1865. His correspondence with such scholars must have made him aware about the archaeological developments taking place outside India, and vice versa. Interestingly *Prehistoric Times* 1865 edition does not have any discussion on Indian megalithic. However by the beginning of 19th century, a good number of publications were

available on Indian megaliths which probably required Lubbock to add a separate section under the subheading - Indian Dolmens (p. 137-140) in 1913 edition of *Prehistoric Times*. In this edition, Lubbock has given a vivid description of megalithic monuments in Europe (England, France, Denmark, and Germany) and India and has described the similarities between them.

There are a few factors, such as governmental initiative and individual curiosity which further paced megalithic studies. The excavation by J.J. Carey is one of such examples. He excavated the site of Khaiwarra (modern Khairawada) due to the desire of Mr. Morris, the then Chief Commissioner of Central Provinces. This reminds another similar instance which displays the interest of Government to carry out ethnographic work. When James Wilkinson Breeks (1830-1872), commissioner of the Nilagiris, was called upon by the government, in common with other heads of districts in the Madras presidency, in 1871, at the instance of the trustees of the Indian Museum at Calcutta, to make a collection of arms, ornaments, dresses, household utensils, tools, agricultural implements, etc. to illustrate the habits and modes of life of the aboriginal tribes in the district, as well as a collection of objects found in ancient cairns and monuments. (http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:Dictionary_of_National_Biography_volume_06.djvu/264). Perhaps this exercise must have helped Breeks to write a scholarly book on the subject entitled, '*An Account of the Primitive Tribes and Monuments in the Nilagiris*' (Breeks, 1873).

Thus, accessibility (to archaeological material and knowledge), individual interest, and in few cases, concern shown by higher authorities, seems to be the motivation for early studies in Megalithic culture. While showing the other side of involvement of British officials, in explorations and excavations, Chakrabarti (1997, p. 26-27) writes, 'In India, for instance, by the early part of the 19th century "barrow-hunting" in the cool of the Nilgiri mountains in the south became a pleasant past time for the people in the army and civil administration. [...] Opening some megalithic circles was very much a part of one's vacation in these hills'. This remark may have been true in some cases but careful recording and observations made by some officials show their genuine interest in the various aspects of megalithic monuments and also the efforts on their side to analyze the obtained data. For example, the paper published by G.G. Pearse is an exemplary research paper. However, such examples may be very limited in number but one cannot discount them.

Authorship of Megalithic Monument: Colonial Understanding

The influence of contemporary Anglo-European studies can be noted in the debate regarding the authorship of stone circles during the colonial period. Foreign scholars who noticed similarities in stone circles and dolmens (better known as burrows, cromlechs, kistavens in contemporary works) in India and Britain wrote very interesting theories, such as either Hindus created megaliths in England or Druidic Scythians were responsible for megaliths in India (for detail see, Chakrabarti, 1976b, p. 66-67).

While going through the early work on Megalithic culture, two major opinion trends about the authorship seem to be prevalent, viz., Scythian or Druidical origin and indigenous tribal origin. M. Taylor published an article in *Journal of Bombay Branch Royal Asiatic Society* entitled 'Notices of Cromlechs, Cairns and other ancient Scytho-Druidical remains in the principality of Sorapur' (Taylor, 1853, p. 380-429); the title itself reflects his opinion about the authorship of these megalithic remains.

While exploring the region of Rajputana (modern Rajasthan) in 1871-1873, A.C.L. Carlleyle, assistant of Cunningham, came across few cairns at two villages, Khera and Satmas (Carlleyle, 1966 (reprint), p. 33-39). However, A.C.L. Carlleyle made an observation, which was dissimilar from the common acceptance on the subject. He observed (Carlleyle, 1966 (reprint), p. 39):

Thus it can be plainly proved that the custom of raising cairns, constructing cromlechs, and erecting stone circles, for sepulchral and memorial purposes, or for sacerdotal mysteries, was not confined to pre-historic aborigines, nor even to one race; but was practiced in common by various races and nations throughout the worlds, - by Aborigines, by the Hebrews and other Semitic tribes, by Aryans, by Pelasgians, and by Celts.

In this backdrop, the conclusions or observations about the authorship of these stone circles in Nagpur division made by scholars can be divided into three distinct notions.

Scythian Origin

Rev. Hislop was perhaps the first to excavate in Central Province and Berar; though his excavation did not contribute as much to the understanding of the subject except collecting antiquities. The details of his excavations are also not much revealing. However, he repeatedly pointed time to time in his writings the Scythian origin of the Megaliths. Probably this opinion was influenced by the studies of H. Congreve (1847) and later Capt. M. Taylor (1851, 1853), who expressed the Scythian origin of Megalithic structures. Similar view was expressed by H. Cousens (1971, reprint) when he noted these structures during his exploration in Central provinces and Berar.

Similarity in European and Indian barrows: J.H. Rivett-Carnac was deeply influenced by the similarities between European and Indian barrows, which is quite visible in his writing. Some of his observations-cum-conclusions are (Rivett-Carnac, 1879, p. 12):

- The shape of tumuli in India and in Europe is the same.
- The barrows in India and in Europe always face towards the south.
- The remains found in the Indian barrows resemble almost exactly the remains dug out of similar burial places in Europe.
- The cup-marks on the boulders which surround the Indian tombs are identical with the marks found on the stones placed around the same class of tumuli in Europe.

Rivett-Carnac's interaction with the scholars from outside India and his personal

observations about megalithic monuments in India, Britain and France perhaps made him more aware about the issue of origin and authorship of megaliths and therefore he did not attempt to assign the authorship of Indian megaliths to any particular group, such as Scythian, Druidical or Celtic.

Not Scythian or European but very advanced race

In his conclusion, G.G. Pearse, who excavated the stone circles at the site of Wurreegaon, did not associate them to Scythians or point out similarity with European barrows. Pearse expressed altogether different view about the authors of the barrow, reflecting his analytical approach. A few of his observations are: they were civilized, agriculturist, produced best of steel, had goldsmiths, rode horses, used potter's wheel, smelted copper, were traders, were neither Buddhist nor Hindoos, Greeks nor Christians, etc. (Pearse, 1869, p. 215-216).

Antiquity of Megaliths

In Vidarbha, series of 14C dates from habitations and burials are consistent, and they range between c. 8th-7th century and c. 3rd century BCE. It will be worthwhile to highlight the significance of the range of radiocarbon dates from Vidarbha megaliths from two related points; here the earliest dates fall between c. 8th and 7th century BCE and the latest do not indicate the occupation of this community later than 2nd century BCE from all the sites of this region (Mohanty and Joshi, 1996, p. 165).

Of the colonial studies, only Pearse tried to provide a time frame to these Megalithic builders. In his words, 'It seems probable they are of anterior date to 330 B.C., and possibly that they are of 1200 B.C.' (Pearse, 1869, p. 215). His conclusion seems fitting with modern day understanding about the antiquity of megaliths.

First Reporting of Physical remains of Human and Horse

A few Megalithic burial sites in Nagpur region yielded physical remains of humans, such as Bhagimohari, Takalaghat-Khapa, Mahurjhari, Boregaon, Naikund, Raipur etc. (see Mohanty and Walimbe, 1993, 1996). However, the first skeletal finding came from excavations at the site of Wurreegaon (Kamptee) in 1867. An interesting description of human remains excavated at Wurreegaon by Pearse is as follows (Pearse, 1869, p. 211-212):

On the 11th July 1867 (i.e. on the fifth day of excavating), at about 6 ½ feet depth, I found the remains of a man. [...] Part of skull, some teeth (one a molar one), are amongst the remains preserved. The body was 6 feet or 6 feet 1 inch long. The bones are of a large-skulled and large-boned person. [...] On the 12th July 1867 (that is on the sixth day of excavating) was found, on the same level as the first body, a second body of about the same size, parallel to it and separated from it a yard or so.

Likewise Vidarbha Megaliths have yielded horse ornaments on a large scale. Mortal remains of horses have also been reported from many sites in Nagpur district and

surrounding, namely — Bhagimohari, Junapani, Khairawada, Mahurjhari, Naikund, Raipur, Takalghata-Khapa (for review see, Vaidya and Goyal, 2012). However it is interesting to note that the first reporting of the horse remains from the Vidarbha region goes back to 1871. During the excavations at Khairawada, Carey observed, '[...] At last some stiff leaden coloured clay was found, fast binding pieces of pottery, and on close examination large quantities of teeth were found, which evidently had been put into a gurrah and imbedded in this clay. These bones are, I believe, the back teeth of horses, in very good preservation.' (Carey, 1871, p. 239).

Sum Up

The city of Nagpur was the capital town of Central Provinces, as noted earlier, and perhaps therefore it received much attention. Initial interests of the British in archaeological studies were focused on the megalithic culture and to some extent on the historical sites in modern Vidarbha (formerly part of C.P. and Berar). Most of these attempts were amateur, unorganized and individually inspired without any professional backing. The studies were more like antiquarian investigations than archaeological research/ surveys except in the case of Henry Cousens. However, many of these early studies are important from the point of view of their intrinsic value (description, observations, conclusions, etc.) rather than being just about the development of archaeological historiography. Views expressed in some of these studies may not be applicable or acceptable today. Nevertheless, they are important if seen in the context of the then available and accessible sources of knowledge. This paper is a small attempt to acknowledge the efforts of lesser known scholars who contributed in the journey of archaeological researches of Vidarbha which have remained unknown to many of the present day scholars.

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