

Archaeological Excavation at Tarighat, Chhattisgarh

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Tarighat is located in the Patan tehsil of Durg district, Chhattisgarh. This particular site is situated on the left bank of river Kharun, a tributary of Seonath. The exact site is discovered by the author during the accidental visit to this area¹. Then this site is proposed for the scientific exploration to the Archaeological Survey of India. The excavation at this site carried out from 2012 to 2014. Various preliminary reports are published various journals about the rich heritage of Tarighat² and Kharun Valley³. A brief report of the first session was published in the Purattatva⁴. After obtaining licence from Archaeological Survey of India, the Directorate of Culture and Archaeology provided the financial support for the scientific exploration to this site.

Site:

There are four mounds of various sizes are existed. There is a *moat* (water channel) is flowing on the western part of the site. This ancient settlement extends in an area of about 5 acres along the river in the form of a series of four mounds of different size and height. This site is locally known as 'Killa' (fort). Some people say that it was the fort of Jagatpal (*Jagatpal ki Killa*). The mound no.1 is locally known as 'Ravan Bhata'. Archaeological Survey of India has granted the license for the excavation in the sessions 2012-13 and 2013-14. The Directorate of Culture and Archaeology, Government of Chhattisgarh conducted the excavation. The two sessions of the excavations at Tarighat revealed following cultural sequences⁵:

Period I : Indo-Greek & Indo-Scythians

Period II : Kushan

Period III : Satavahan

Period IV : Gupta (Sarabhapuriya & Nalla)

Period V : Post-Gupta (Kalchuri, Islamic & Maratha)

The above chronology based on the findings of coins, seals, sealing and other supporting evidences.

Period I

The excavation yielded some coins of Indo-Greek period and Indo-Scythians. In this cultural phase some post holes with cherd grains with glazed black potteries and black slipped ware ceramics are traced out. This cultural phase is noticed below the Kushan period. Some bone implements and ivory implements are also recovered from the trenches. Due to heavy water logged further excavation is not carried out.

Period II

This cultural phase is attested by the finding of Kushan coins, seals, and terracotta figurines and sung plaques. In this operation yielded ceramic industries like curved bases, bowls, iron implements, copper objects, and beads of terracotta and semi precious stones. The ceramic industries like black slipped ware, black and red ware, red slipped ware etc are found from this level. To compare other early historical sites, here all the structures are made up of stone. Very less amount of bricks are used in the structural creation. The stratigraphical evidence shows that the houses made in three phases.

The archaeological operation yielded a Kushan copper coin hoard. There are about 29 copper Kushan coins in the hoard. Large number of Kushan coins also found in various trenches in this level. Besides this other Kushan copper coins are also retrieved from this level in various trenches. The terracotta figurines of human and animal of this period also retrieved which comprised terracotta human and animal figurines, beads of terracotta and semi precious stone materials, stone balls, glass beads, ivory beads, bone points, iron and copper objects. One stone seal is retrieved from this cultural level. There are four letter *Sa, Ma, Ve, Da* are engraved which is read as *Samaveda*⁶. Besides this, six circular dots are also engraved on the right below of the seal. This script is assigned to 2nd C.A.D. The terracotta figurines prepared out of single and double moulds indication that of Yaskhni in the typical of this tradition. Some moulds of figure are also retrieved. One fragmented stone plaque of Sunga-Kushan style, and other terracotta figurines are traced out.

Period III

This period is attested with the evidence of Satavahan and Post Satavhana coins, seals, sealing and terracotta. From the site a number of semi-precious stone beads are recovered. The beads of agate, carnelian etc is found. A number of terracotta figures are also traces out. The terracotta's are of figurines, skin rubbers etc are also recovered. All the figures from Tarighat are finely baked and some of them have a red slipped applied to them. The Satavahana terracotta's have holes in places which were apparently intended for letting out the hot expanded air resulting from baking. The retrieved Satavahana terracotta's include male, female figures and animal figurines. Huge amount of Post-Satavahan copper coins are

retrieved from sections of the mounds. These coins are known as elephant deity type of coins⁵. One beautiful head cutting from the neck is retrieved from the site.

During this cultural phase, the settlement pattern designed in a proper manner which followed in the successive period. All the structures are built of stones consisting of single, double and multiple rooms. The house situated on the both sides of a common road. This road is oriented from north to south. There are small roads are joined to the main road of both sides. The excavation at trench revealed an interlocked structure which special mentioned. Large numbers of terracotta beads and semi precious stone beads, skin rubbers, terracotta impressing net design, stoppers, reel, single and double perforated discs are retrieved. The operation yielded large number of dice of various sizes and various materials like terracotta, wood and ivory. These objects are in number of marks. Various types of toy carts wheels are traced out from the level of Period II to III). One stone seal which was found before the excavation. It has only two letters with symbols of moon (*Chandra*) and sun (*Surya*) engraved above them. It is engraved in early Brahmi characters of 3rd C.A.D. and read as *VADHA*).

Period IV

This period is assigned to Sarabhapuriya and Nalla dynasty which is very contemporary to Gupta period. This period is succeeded to Satavhan period in a stratified deposit. This Sarabhapuria dynasty is known from the seventeen copper-plate grants, one only partially surviving, which were issued from Sarabhapura and Sripura (modern Sirpur). There is no stone inscription discovered so far for this dynasty. The name of the dynasty is taken as Sarabhapuriyas because their earliest grants were issued from Sarabhapura, eleven out of sixteen grants were issued from this town.

The excavation revealed three gold coins of Sarabhapuria dynasty. One gold coin of Mahendraditya and other two gold coins are of Prasannamatra. The variety of symbols of Prassanmatra coin may indicate that this coin issued from other mints. The representation of the symbols authenticated the clues that the kings of this dynasty are the followers of Vishnu by faith. The stone seal is engraved in box headed early Brahmi character of 5th C.A.D. and read as *Śrī Pradhā [n]* or *Śrī Prāsāna*. From this cultural level terracotta and semi precious beads are coming out. A plaque of Lajyagauri (*chhinamastka*) also recovered from this level. Various votive objects and fragments of plaques are recovered. The stone structures are severely disturbed due to the stone robbing by the villagers. One trench revealed rammed floor with platform. The excavation operation at the Mound No.2 of Tarighat yielded a gold coin of Nalla dynasty. Another fragmented gold coin of this dynasty found from the Mound No. I of the site.

Period V

This cultural phase is defined by the evidence of the coins and some latter period of structures and sculptures. One copper coin of Jajjyaldev of Ratanpur Kalchuri dynasty also found from this level. This period attested with the findings of kalchuri coins, potteries and medieval sculptures like, Ganesh etc. One copper coin of Jajjyaldev of Kalchuri dynasty is traced out from the upper level of excavation. Besides these some later period Kalchuri sculptures are housed in a temple of this site. On the stylistic point of view these sculptures are of Kalchuri or Later Kalchuri period.

Conclusion

The findings of Indo-Greek, Indo-Scythians, Satavan and Kushan coins, early historic potteries, terracottas, structural feathers and other material culture of Tarighat shows its date to early. The recovered stone seals depicted various clearly shows that this site might be an important trade centre with urban settlement in the South Kosala. Tarighat is an important early historical site in Central India. Among the river bank townships, Tarighat holds an important position. Its location in the ancient Kosala territory has been strategically significant politically as well as economically. The findings of early historic potteries, seals, sealing, coins, terracottas, structural feathers and other material culture of Tarighat shows its date to early. The recovered stone seals depicted various clearly shows that this site might be an important trade centre with urban settlement in the South Kosala.

References:

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5. *I am very thankful to Shri J.R. Bhagat for giving permission to write up a note on further excavation at Tarighat (2013-14)*
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