



Copper Hoard Sites of Central Himalayan Region and Abutting Areas

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In India, there is proof of human colonization at many cultural levels. One of these called "Copper Hoard Culture," in which several copper artifacts from many archaeological sites have aroused the curiosity of archaeologists. These are referred to as "Copper Hoard Tools" since the majority of these artifacts were found in hoards. Such antiquities belong to non-Harappan culture which comes in proto-historic phase of Ancient India.

The Central Himalayan region spans from the Terai region in a line from Dehradun to Khatima-Tanakpur in the Nainital district in the south to the western Tibetan boarder in the north. It also stretches from the Terai region in an east-west direction from the western border of Nepal to the river Tonnes, a tributary of the Jamuna. The excavations in these regions have brought to the light the settlements of many ancient cultures viz; Harappans, Ochre Coloured Pottery, Copper Hoard, Painted Grey Ware and Northern Black Polished Ware. The spread of ancient cultures throughout the Central Himalayan areas suggests that they have discovered a means of survival that allows them to continue living and exploring their respective domains.

In Central Himalayan region three sites have been reported which contains the Anthropomorphic Figures, an exclusive object of Copper Hoard Culture. The two sites in the district Pithoragarh; Bankot and Nanipatal has yielded anthropomorphic figures in the number eight and five respectively. An anthropomorphic figure was reported from Almora also which was later shifted to Haldwani. These copper hoard objects belong to the chalcolithic phase of India. Anthropomorph is one of the major objects of Copper Hoard culture which found in a broad perspective in Ganga-Yamuna Doab region. The central Himalayan region also contains the copper mine which are mentioned in many accounts of the foreign travellers. Copper hoards are associated with Ochre Coloured Pottery as they have been reported from many sites of Ganga-Yamuna Doab region. A trail trench has been taken in Nainipatal where few Ochre Coloured Pottery sherds have also been reported.

From district Haridwar, two sites have been reported where the copper implements were found, along with the Ochre Coloured Pottery, which expresses their connection with other cultures as well.

Description of the Findings (Fig. 1)

Bankot

Bankot site is situated in Bering tehsil in Pithorgarh district of Uttarakhand. This village is situated on the slope of a mountain near the Saryu River. In 1989 eight anthropomorphic figures have been reported by the villagers on the slope of the mountain near the Bankot Inter College. Two of them are fragments and six are intact. According to the villagers these anthropomorphs were stacked one over another when they were discovered. These figures are kept in the custody of Shri Chanchal Singh Bankoti, at Bankot (Joshi 2000: 104-111) and one is with the Govind Ballabh Pant Government Museum in Almora (Yule 2001: 119). When the figures were found they all were placed one over the other (Fig. 2).

Maheshwar P. Joshi has studied these objects and elaborated that the figures were cast in a tray like open mould because it appears flat on one surface and left in the open atmosphere to cool them down which is evident by the wrinkled skin and resulted in the porous body and core (Joshi 2012: 112-119). Dimension and weight of the figure is given below (Agrawal 2000: 108):

1. Dimension of the figure is 24x30x1-3 cm and weight is 3.30 kg.
2. Dimension of this figure is 23.5x30x1.5-2 cm and weight is 2.50 kg.
3. Dimension of the figure is 24x30.5x1-3 cm and weight is 3.45 kg.
4. Dimension of the figure is 15x30x1.5-2 cm and weight is 2.15 kg.
5. Dimension of the figure is 30.5x14x2-3 cm and weight is 2.46 kg.
6. Dimension of the figure is 24.5x14x2-3 cm and weight is 2.40 kg.

These anthropomorphs have oval head and short horizontally spread arms across the body. The lower body is concave on the base with the very low profile. The legs are almost flat, slightly splayed near the feet (Fig. 2.1). These figures are thicker as compared to usual anthropomorphic figures. There are no beating marks on the body of the figure (IAR 1988-89: 87).

Nainipatal

This site is located in Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand. Some copper hoard objects have been reported by the laborers from Nainipatal. Total five anthropomorphic figures were found, which were later acquired by G. V. Pant Government Museum, Almora. These figures were made in an open mould because it shows some gas cavity on the surface. The body marks of the figures are very deep and do not seem as a chisel mark, which is usually found on other anthropomorphic figures. These figures are quite similar to the Bankot figures except the weight which is lighter and the arms are much longer and curved than that of the Bankot figures (Fig. 4). These figures seem to have been developed from the Bankot proto-type (Joshi 2012: 113).

Haldwani

A local journalist of Haldwani exposed the anthropomorphic figure in the newspaper Amar Ujala on 8th May 1986 (Yule 2001: 119). One anthropomorphic figure was reported from this site which is now owned by Sri Shivaraj Saran Agrawal, who purchased this from Almora which means this figure was originally found in Almora. This figure measures 37.5 cm in length, 34 cm in width and weighs approximately 5 kg (Joshi 2012: 114).

This figure is the developed form of anthropomorphic figure. The arms are coiled

and the length of the feet is equal to the body. The head is prominent and head ridge is also present on the both side of the figure. It has thin chisel marks on the body (Fig.4).

Bahadarabad

This site is located at a distance of 12 km of the river Ganga. Few copper objects were recorded during the excavation of a canal which consist 6 flat axes, 1 shoulder axe, 5 bangles and 1 lance head. In 1951-52 an excavation was conducted by Y.D. Sharma. In the excavation at the depth of approximately 6 m the excavator has found few Ochre Coloured Pottery sherds along with water soaked, compact over burned clay fragment. Earlier Y. D. Sharma propounded a connection between Bahadarabad and Late Harappan wares. But later he called it a local character of the pottery within the context of Ochre Coloured Pottery. On the same site some quartzite flake tools and waste flakes were also recorded but those were not directly associated with the hoards (Sharma 1971-72: 40).

Nasirpur

This site is located in Manglour tehsil of Hardwar district. The site lies 9 kilometers west of Ambakheri. This site consists of a copper hoard along with Ochre Coloured Pottery. The copper objects—2 flat axes, 2 battle axes, 2 lance heads, 1 harpoon, and 2 bars—were acquired by Gurukul Kangari Vishwavidyalaya, Haridwar in 1960. This site does not reside any occupational remain as according to the examination of B. B. Lal, only few Ochre Coloured Pottery sherds were recorded from a yellow brown natural looking earth (AIR 1965: 44).

Discussion

The Chalcolithic culture is incomplete without the study of copper hoards, which take an important place in the history of northern India. These implements are of different types, which include harpoons, swords, antenna swords, rings, axes, bangles, bars, chisels, anthropomorphic figures, and a few other objects. The identity of the objects mentioned above is hidden in their names, except for one, i.e., the anthropomorphic figure, which is one of the highlighted implements of Copper Hoard Culture. A lot of work has been done on anthropomorphic figures by eminent scholars. By eminent scholars who talk about their types, their utility, and their relations with other objects. Till today, the exact utility has not been propounded by the archaeologists because in archaeology, any object got its identity on the basis of their context findings, and anthropomorphic figures have been collected more or less in the same context until today's discovery with the other copper hoard objects. Because they were found mostly in the same context, it has become a topic of discussion about their uses and importance in the Copper Hoard culture.

Copper hoards are associated with the Ochre Coloured Pottery culture because they have been recorded from different sites like Bithur in Kanpur Dehat district (Kumar 1991: 47), Bisauli in Badayun district (Lal 1951: 25), Pariyar in Unnao district (Lal, Dikshit 1979-80: 26-31), Kiratpur in Bullandshah (Gaur 1981: 73-76), Saifai (Wahal 1971-72: 12-13), Bahadrabad (Sharma 1971-72: 40), Nasirpur (AIR 1965: 44) and so on.

D. P. Sharma has included the figures reported from Pithoregarh and Bankot in the classification of Proto- Anthropomorphic Figures.

The Kumaon area was very popular in ancient times for copper mines. The Bankot anthropomorphic figures seem like an initial form of anthropomorphic evolution, and this site was surrounded by copper mines, which resulted in its being a manufacturing site for the anthropomorphic figures, which were then supplied to different places

(Joshi 2012: 116). In the Central Himalayan region, copper working is still in practice by the local Tamta community (Joshi 2012: 116) and it can be concluded that the Tamta's are the lineal descendants of the Ganga Valley Copper Hoard Culture.

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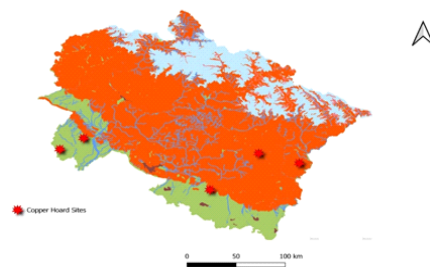


Fig.1. Copper Hoard Sites of Central Himalayan Region and Abutting Areas.



Fig. 2. Anthropomorphic Figures kept in-situ on a boulder Bankot, Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand, India

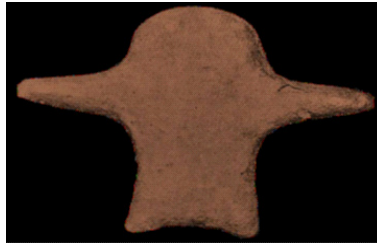


Fig. 2.1. Bankot Anthropomorphic Figure.



Fig. 3. Nainipatal Anthropomorphic Figures.



Fig.4. Haldwani Anthropomorphic Figure (Courtesy Maheshwar P. Joshi 2012)

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