



DOCUMENTING THE EXPLORATION CONDUCTED IN LOWER REACHES OF MULA -VENTURING IN THE GODAVARI BASIN, AHMEDNAGAR.

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PROLOGUE

Rivers have been the cradle of civilizations. It brooded and nurtured several ancient civilizations and stayed to be the life line of mankind. The availability of fertile flood plain was a perk to prosper farming which made them self-sufficient. The river was an easy means of navigation and it proved to be the best defence for the settlements.

Godavari falls in Ahmednagar District of Maharashtra. Right from the beginning it is known as the “paradise of archaeological settlements” because of the presence of remarkable sites such as Newasa, Chirki Nala, Daimabad, Jorwre, Paithan, Nasik, Puntamba and Kopargaon. Most of the exploration and excavation of different cultural settlement were carried out on the main steam of Godavari and it's major tributary Pravara, while Mula which is the second major right side tributary to Godavari, mostly remained an untouched. To understand the landscape characters, sedimentary environment along with floral and faunal succession intercalated with the different cultural materials in the basin Geoarchaeological exploration on both the banks of Mula was conducted. Initial exploration was conducted in upper and middle reaches in May-December 2015 and June 2016 (Abhilasha & Sabale 2016) while the lower reaches was explored in fourth season of the field work conducted in June 2019.

LANDSCAPE

To describe the landscape of Ahmednagar, the district where Mula flows, it can be seen that the complete picture of this district can be divided into three type of geological feature. The western boundary of the district is covered with the high hill ranges of Sahyadri which is seen to be followed by the northern and southern plain region dissected by the central plateau region. These high hill ranges and plateaus have been the result of the basaltic lava flow which took place during the Cretaceous-Eocene age. These landscapes are popularly known as deccan trap and are associated with different types of minerals such as lime stone, sand stone, clay etc. Black cotton soil is present almost everywhere in the district. Calcareous nodules can be seen associated with the soil mostly concentrated in the vicinity of the stream-courses. The plains of Sangamner taluka on either side of Pravara and Mula occur rich Munjal soil, a reddish sandy loam and chopan soil that is ideal for horticulture.

PREVIOUS WORK

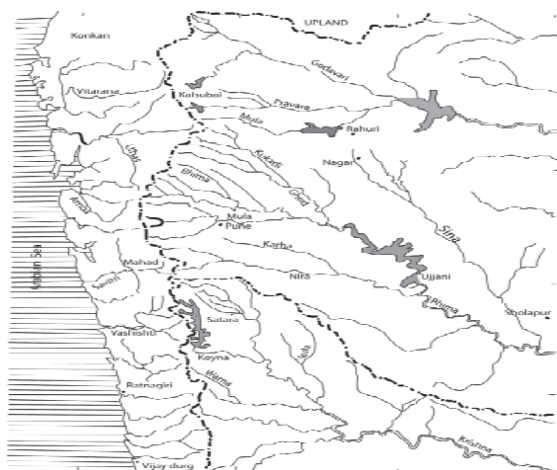
Godavari valley has shown rich archaeological site which shows continuity in cultural records right from palaeolithic period to medieval period which was proven by excavation at Nevasa (Sankalia et al 1960). Mula a major tributary to Godavari falls in Ahmednagar District of Maharashtra. Right from the beginning it has been known as the “paradise of archaeological settlements” because of the presence of remarkable sites such as Newasa, Chirki Nala, Daimabad, Jorwre, Paithan, Nasik, Puntamba

and Kopargaon. In 1954-55, Shri B.P Bopardikar of the south western circle of the department discovered tools of series-2. Mostly scrapers, from Baregaon-Nandur, Tandulwadi, Dhanori Budruk and Khurd and Manori-Renapur, each situated on the Mula or its tributaries. Two new Paleolithic sites at Tisgaon in district Ahmednagar were discovered by the Deccan College. In the same district were also discovered two purely Microlithic sites, one at Ghargaon and the other near Sangamner.

In 1960 – 61 exploration work was carried out in Rahuri and Parner talukas where B.P. Bopardikar discovered Microliths, Chalcolithic and early historical sites in 1966-67 Corvinus undertook a project for the search early man under Prof. H.D Sankalia. The work was to be conducted upon the cut off trenches of the spill way of Mula dam at Mulanagar near Rahuri in Ahmednagar District, fossil bones of *Bos namadicus* and tusk of *elephas* were collected from the cutoff of trench of the proposed dam at the Godavari near Paithan. A carbonized wood of *Terminalia Arjun* was collected in association with the unrolled jaw of *Bos namadicus* at Mula dam project in the alluvium buried below the present bed-level of the Mula. Again in 1985-86, S.S Parekh of Aurangabad circle carried out village to village survey and noticed late medieval gateway, ruins of two temples with sculptures of Bramha, Vishnu and Nandi in Chas village near Sangamner. S.A. Sali carried out archaeological exploration(1960s-70s) in this region and located over seventy five Chalcolithic and numerous historical sites, but his work was not followed up since then. As various remarkable sites were discovered near about this river stream so this became our area of interest to conduct a further study (Abhilasha & Sabale 2016).

PRESENT STUDY

Godavari basin and its tributary has remained the life line of the people in Deccan so basin appeared to give an assured output, so to understand the man land relationship and the past cultural insignia the exploration of Mula river basin have been undertaken. Survey was planned systematically after studying the maps and related literature. Topographic maps of Geological survey of India with map number 47 E/10, 47 E/11, 47 E/15, 47 I/7, 47 I/11, 47 I/10, 47 I/15 were studied in detail to understand the landscape. The river covers five tehsils which includes Akole, Sangamner, Parner, Rahuri and Nevasa.



Map showing the rivers flowing in the Deccan including Mula (Sabale, P.D 2014)

This was a thorough village to village survey in particular. Field walking was done in each individual village to understand the character of land and the cultural past of the present settlement. The pottery sherds, tools, bangles etc. were collected in zip lock bags as surface collections; the monuments were recorded for detailed study. Several sites were newly discovered while very vague number of sites were revisited. Mentioned below is the list of explored sites in lower reaches of Mula during fourth season.

Sr No	Sites	Geo-Coordinates	Newly Discovered / Previously Documented	Cultural Period
1	Vambori	19°17'23.5"N 74°43'58.3"E	Revisited	Early Medieval
2	Deswandi	19°24'54"N 74°41'47"E	Newly Discovered	Geoarchaeological, Mesolithic
3	Kondhwad	19°24'36"N 74°42'08"E	"	Geoarchaeological, Mesolithic
4	Shilegaon	19°24'13"N 74°41'05"E	"	Geoarchaeological, Mesolithic
5	Kendel Budrukh	19°25'17"N 74°43'27"E	"	Geoarchaeological, Mesolithic
6	Umbre	19°22'159"N 74°43'34.9"E	"	Late Medieval
7	Sonai	19° 23'31"N 74°49'31"E	"	Early Medieval
8	Shani Shingnapur	19°24'00"N 74°48'42"E	"	Medieval
9	Shingve Tukai	19°24'51.0"N 74°54'38.2"E	"	Early Medieval
10	Ghodegaon	19°20'53.2"N 74°52'54.6"E	"	Early Medieval
11	Chanda	19°21'15.8"N 74°55'0.2"E	"	Early Historic
12	Mandve Khurd	19°21'07.2"N 74°53'51"E	"	Early Medieval
13	Morgavhan	19°19'13.9"N 74°54'15.54"E	"	Early Medieval
14	Hingoni	19°24'16.2"N 74°54'22.4"E	"	Early Medieval
15	Miri	19°16'57.3"N 74°57'44.3"E	"	Medieval
16	Malharwadi	19°23'11"N 74°53'5'41"E	"	Late Medieval
17	Kharwandi	19°26' 36.3" N 74° 52' 58.0" E	"	Early Medieval
18	Nevasa	19°32' 53.4" N 74° 53' 07.7"E	Revisited	Early Medieval
19	Rajegaon	19° 17'36.4"N 74°53'35.3" E	Newly Discovered	Medieval

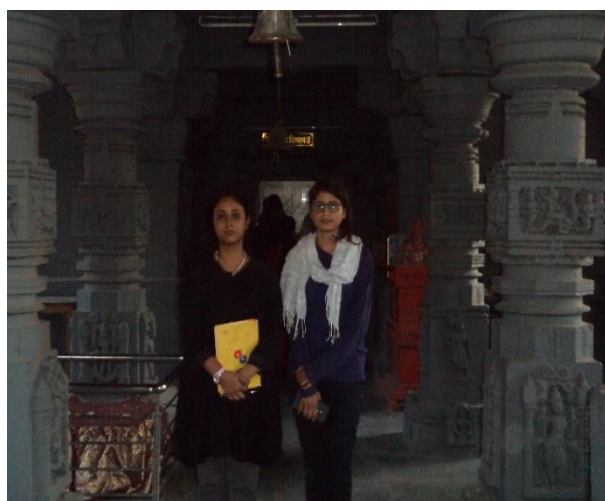
Details of sites explored in the lower reaches of Mula river basin (Abhilasha and Sabale 2019).



The ruined Early Medieval temple at Vambori



Showing microliths strewn at Shilegaon

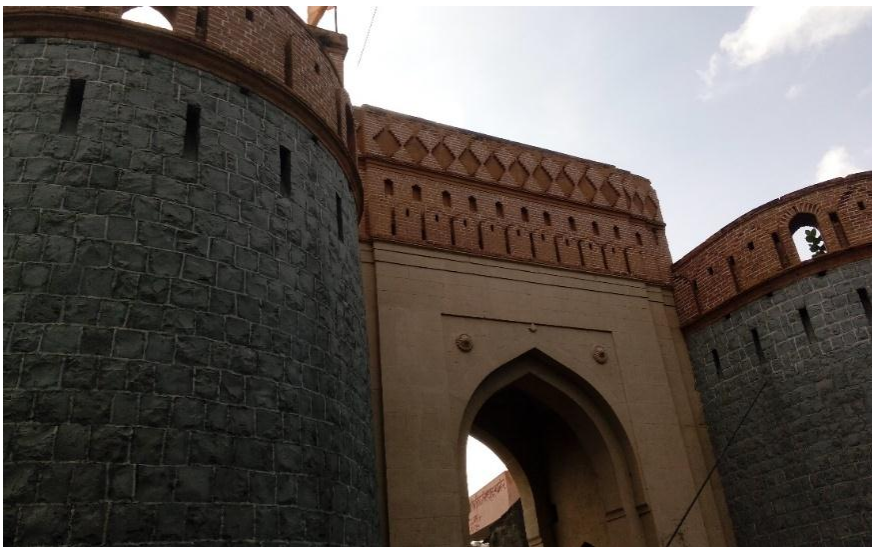


Showing richly ornated early medieval temple at Sonai.





Herostone kept in the temple premises at Sonai



Fortification gateway at Shingve



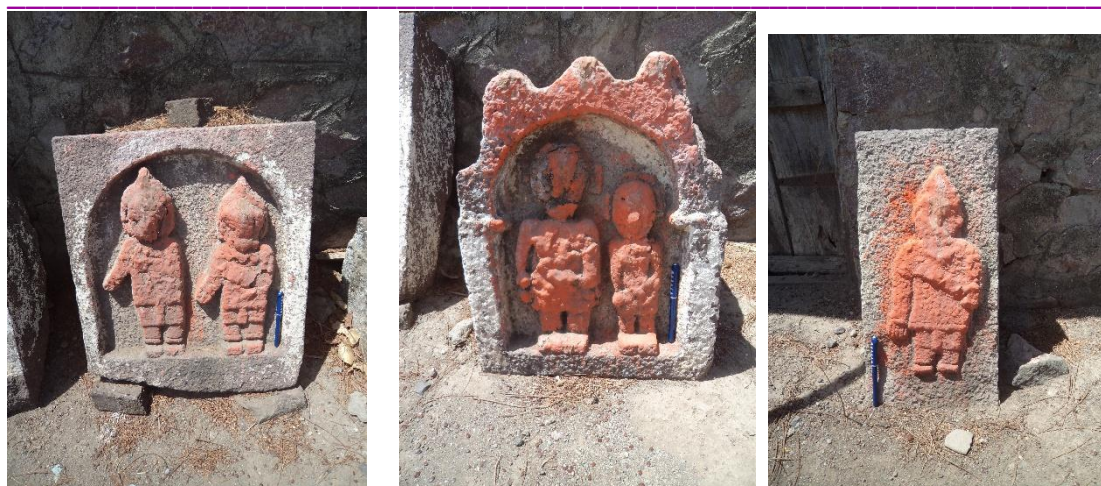
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Early Medieval pottery from Shingve.



Late Yadava Jogeshwari Mahadev at Hingoni.





Recently erected memorials all around the temple at Chanda showing the continuity of erection of Herostones in Mula basin.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

While exploring the lower reaches we were not very sure about the discovery of sites as we could document earlier during the first three explorations in upper and middle reaches, as the lower reaches is densely populated and also a large proportion of land is used for agriculture. But to our astonishment we could register over a dozen of sites which was important to be documented for archaeological, cultural and ethnoarchaeological studies. The landscape was a mix of some plateau region and was mostly dominated by the black soil patches. Sites with variation in cultural identities could be seen ranging from microlithic, early historic, early medieval to late medieval.

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