STONE AGE CULTURES OF MALWA

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ABSTRACT—This paper records new localities of Palaeolithic, Epi-palaeolithic and Mesolithic (?) industries of Malwa and gives description of the tools found.

Two years back, Malwa, like Rajasthan, was a terra incognita in prehistoric researches. The only discovery of which we know was of a grey quartzite ‘boucher’ from Nimad, picked up in the latter half of the last century. Shri H. V. Wakankar discovered a number of palaeoliths (Series I) at Mandsaur in 1955 and sent them for studies to Dr. Sankalia. The latter decided to follow up this promising discovery and sent Shri A. P. Kathari to survey the area.

Shivna is one of the tributaries of the Chambal. It rises from a village named Shivna in Pratapgarh territory in the Western Malwa plateau. The important sites visited on this river from its source towards its confluence are: Non-na-Kanthar, Kharki Mata, Ramghat, Mandsaur, Borakheri, Oka-kheri, Chiklia, Dhikola, Naharghar, Suara and Ali Mahadeo. In addition to these were visited Damdam, Itali and Arnia on Somali Nadi and Afzalpur on Tumban Nadi, both tributaries of the Shivna.

Implements occur downstream from Nanna-Kanthar. Sections might be seen at many places but the important ones are Ramghat and Shamshanghat (Mandsaur) and Naharghar between the villages Bilod and Koela.

At Naharghar, on the northern bank of the river the twenty feet high section consists of no less than nine strata deposited on the basal trap rock. The first two (from the bottom upwards) are old gravelly layers. The only difference between the two is that the second layer is much too cemented and appears to lie unconformably; if so the intermediate silt is eroded. In the first layer, we find tools in situ. The third layer is also of a gravel, not so well-cemented and brownish in colour.

This gravel bed is succeeded by a phase of silty deposition. Three successive deposits of silty layers are again followed by a thin gravel (6") which in turn is again followed by a layer of silt. Over the last, there is a deposit of loose gravels containing angular stones which have become rusty due to continuous exposure. The angularity of the stones and the absence of any comparable deposit in any other site in the Shivna valley suggests that this is a completely localised occurrence.
Fig. I — Pointed handaxe with pebbly, rectangular butt.
Fig. II — Pipal-leaf (Ficus religiosa) shaped handaxe; very symmetrical, showing the use of wood technique.
Fig. III — Plano-convex, doubly pointed handaxe with controlled retouching all along the edges.
Fig. IV — Pear shaped handaxe with bold flakings on both sides; on the upper surface they all converge at the hump in the middle.
Fig. V — Pear shaped handaxe with a hump in the centre on the upper surface; tongue-like tip. Here again all the bold flake scars are converging at the hump from all sides.
Fig. VI — Elongated pear with sinuous discs; controlled flaking visible.
Text—Fig. 2—Lower Palaeolithic tools from R. Shivna:

Reg. No. MDR. 98  
Fig. VII  —Doubly pointed handaxe with almost biconvex section.

Reg. No. MDR. 53  
Fig. VIII  —Pear shaped handaxe; round butt, tongue-like tip, straight edges, lenticular section at the tip.

Reg. No. MDR. 81  
Fig. IX  —Pear shaped, unifacial handaxe with tongue-like tip and round butt, working edge wavy.

Reg. No. MDR. 85  
Fig. X  —U-shaped Cleaver with flaring edge on end flake; cleaver edge achieved by the intersecting of two flake scars from either side. —MDR. 265, Fig. XII and MDR. 240 Fig. XIII are cleavers of miniature variety. Fig. XI, v-shaped; Fig. XII, U-shaped, Fig. XIII, U-shaped with oblique edge.
The other two sections referred to before are found at Ramghat and Shamshanghat at Mandsaur. Their sequence is as follows:

**RAMGHAT SECTION**

(4) Yellowish silt.
(3) Fine well-cemented gravel.
(2) Cemented pebbly gravel with large trap flakes (wide-angled).
(1) Basal trap rock.

Though both sections are similar in their nature of deposition, the thickness of the different strata varies. Further, the cemented pebbly gravel-bed overlying the rock at Shamshanghat contains trap flakes with wide-angled unprepared platform and prominent semi-cone of percussion; while at Ramghat the comparable deposit yields haemetic, red, fine quartzite.

The above mentioned sections indicate the existence of three wet phases separated from one another by arid phases.

_Palaeoliths of Series I_ occur _in situ_ in the lower gravels at Mandsaur near Ramghat and Shamshanghat and at Naharghar. Tools of Series II, called Nevasian (Middle Palaeolithic) by Sankalia and Banerjee were also found in stratified deposits (4th layer in the Nahargarh section).

The lower Palaeolithic or the Series I Industry consists of hand-axes, cleavers, scrapers, chopping tools on cores and flakes. The technique ranges from the crude bold flaking to the highly evolved shallow flaking by wooden hammer. Implements are in an amazingly good state of preservation and are made on fine grained haemetic red quartzite, slaty quartzite and rarely on trap or jasper.

Unifacial and bifacial handaxes together constitute about a third of the assemblage. The former are on flake (end or side), while the latter may be on core of flake. Typologically these specimens can be divided into three stages. Stage I is marked by boldly and deep flaking. Stage II shows, besides bold flaking, extensive use of step-flaking, while in the last stage the implements become more symmetrical and are worked by wooden hammer technique. The general shapes are flattened pear, almond and elongate-oval.

**SHAMSHANGHAT SECTION**

(5) Yellowish silt.
(4) Fine well-cemented gravel.
(3) Yellowish silt.
(2) Cemented pebbly gravel with Abbevillo-Acheulian hand-axes.
(1) Basal trap rock.

About a fifth of the assemblage consists of cleavers. These are necessarily on flakes with wide-angled striking platforms. Both U and V shapes occur with straight or oblique cutting edges.

Equally large numbers of flakes are found at Mandsaur. They all show an oblique angled striking platform and prominent semi-cone of percussion. At Shamshanghat large flakes of trap were found _in situ_ in the pebbly gravel. In the same layer handaxes occur above these flakes.

In addition to the above mentioned tools there occur deeply flaked cores of varying shapes and sizes with equatorial jagged edge running along the periphery. These are the characteristic chopping tools. Scrapers, mostly on pebbles, and chipped along one side, are also found. A few thin discoid cores are in the assemblage.

_Middle Palaeolithic or Series II:_ At Mandsaur and Naharghar they come from the middle gravels, though at Maheshwar one was found in the lower gravel. This industry is characterized by several types of scrapers on flakes as well as cores and specialized types of points.

Another later industry is found scattered in black cotton soil. This industry contains mostly one type of tools—several varieties of scrapers and seems to be derived from the former.

At many places in Malwa microliths on whitish translucent chalcedony, carnelian or
TEXT—FIG. 3—Lower Palaeolithic tools from R. Shivna:

Reg. No. mdr. 251  Fig. XIV — U-shaped cleaver with straight edge, at right angle to the major axis.
Reg. No. mdr. 180  Fig. XV — Biggest handaxe of the collection; material slaty quartzite.
Reg. No. mdr. 179  Fig. XVI — Beautiful handaxe on the flake; material slaty quartzite.
Reg. No. mdr. 253  Fig. XVII — Rectangular cleaver with straight working edge, material slaty quartzite.
Reg. No. mdr. 286  Fig. XVIII—Core with 'equatorial jagged' edge.
Reg. No. mdr. 249  Fig. XIX — Elongated ovate, worked all over by wood technique.
Reg. No. mdr. 500  Fig. XX — The most beautiful handaxe of green jasper found in India. Extremely symmetrical, worked all over by wooden hammer technique.
TEXT—FIG. 4.—Middle Palaeolithic tools: Nos. 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13, 17, 18, 27, 28. Epi-palaeolithic or Proto-microlithic: Nos. 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 11, 16, 19, 23, 25, 26. Mesolithic (?) or Proto-chalcolithic microliths: Nos. 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 24.

1 and 2—fluted cores; 3—Irregular core; 4-7—Side scrapers; 8—Hollow scraper; 9—End scraper; 10-16—Side scraper; 17-19—Points; 20-21—fluted conical cores; 22—Crescent; 23—End scraper; 24—A round scraper; 25—Flake on green jasper; 26—Tanged—point; 27—Flake; 28—Retouched primary flake.

(MDR = Mandsaur; MRG = Nahargarh; NRSG = Narsinga; MHSR = Maheshwar; PTL = Patal Pani; DGR = Deoguraria).
rarely on quartz, occur as surface finds. In view of the fact that microliths had a longer life in tribal areas it becomes difficult to assign any definite date to them.

Excavations at Navdatoli—Maheshwar, Nagda and other sites have shown the existence of a Chalcolithic industry underlying the early historic habitational deposits. The different components of the chalcolithic industry are geometric microlithic blades, lunates, pen-knife blades, painted pottery and, extremely few, copper pieces.

Thus we get, in Malwa, the following chronological sequence:

5. Chalcolithic Blade Culture—over black or brownish soil.
4. Pre-Chalcolithic Microlithic Industry—on the surface (so far).
3. Epi-palaeolithic scraper Industry—in black or brownish soil.
2. Nevasian (Middle Palaeolithic) Industry—in the middle gravel.
1. Lower Palaeolithic Industry—in the basal gravels.