MAN AND ENVIRONMENT

ABSTRACTS

VOLUME L, NO. 1 (January-June 2025)

1. Examining the Hafting and Hand-grip Evidence on Acheulian Cleavers from Damdongri, Madhya Pradesh, Via the Blind Test and Lithic Reduction Analysis

Niharika Srivastava

The transition from ‘hand to handle’ in the lithic industry during our deep human history has been debated amongst scholars for years. Reluctantly, the introduction of hafting in South Asia can be pushed back to the Middle Palaeolithic. It is generally agreed that in lithic knapping, every flake removed is deliberate and predetermined. Heavy-duty activities are integral to daily human life, and the incorporation of hafting stone tools onto handles enhances the efficiency of these activities. In light of these observations, the Blind Test and Lithic Reduction Sequence Analysis were conducted on a selected number of cleavers from the Acheulian assemblage at Damdongri, Madhya Pradesh, to ascertain whether these cleavers were utilised as hand-held tools or hafted with handles. This study has been undertaken with the fundamental concept of the role of hand grip and hafting methods through a combined analysis of Blind Tests and Lithic Reduction Analysis. The findings of this pilot study undoubtedly and convincingly establish the antiquity of hafted stone tools with handles to the Acheulian period in South Asia. Although this was only a small-sample size study, it can be proposed that in India we had ‘hand to handle’ or ‘hand and handle’ since the Acheulian techno cultural phase itself.

Niharika Srivastava, *Man and Environment* L (1): 1-22 [2025].
ME-2025-1A01

2. Evaluating the Identity and Chronology of Vasai Ware from Saurashtra, Gujarat, India

Srisamarth Inamdar

Vasai Ware is a Black-Painted-Red Ware pottery tradition from the ‘Early Historic’ period in the Saurashtra region, Gujarat. Its affinity with the Rang Mahal Pottery (RMP) of the Ghaggar Hakra basin has been widely assumed, rather uncritically, since the 1960s. In the present study, archaeological data and literature about Vasai Ware and RMP from sites excavated in Western India are examined to understand this agreed-upon connection. This study analyses Vasai Ware and its characteristic features through traditional archaeological methods and discusses its affinity to the RMP within the earliest historical context of Saurashtra. It also delves into the chronological position of Vasai Ware and its spatial distribution outside Saurashtra, and argues that the hitherto held chronological position of Vasai Ware requires revision

Srisamarth Inamdar, *Man and Environment* L (1): 23-32 [2025].
ME-2025-1A02

3. Preliminary Observations on the Lower Palaeolithic Site of Ghodapal, Mayurbhanj District, Odisha

Basanta Kumar Mohanta, Manu Naik, Samir Maharana, Sunita Barik, Sadija Sahu and Ranjan Kumar Naik

Recent explorations on the banks of the Budhabalanga River close to the Similipal Biosphere Reserve have revealed a Lower Palaeolithic site at Ghodapal, Mayurbhanj District, Odisha. Based on the geological formation, environmental conditions, raw material availability, typo-technology of the artefacts, etc., this paper presents an initial report of the findings from this site.

Mohanta *et al*., *Man and Environment* L (1): 33-37 [2025].
ME-2025-1A03

4. Study of Palaeolithic Sites in the Kharagpur Hills, South Bihar, India: A Preliminary Report

Akash Pandey, Sushmita Sen, Sushama G. Deo, Jayendra Joglekar

The present study provides a preliminary investigation of newly documented and previously reported sites in the Kharagpur Hills, South Bihar. The findings indicate a significant Palaeolithic occupation and cultural continuity from the Acheulian to the microliths, suggesting the presence of early hominins in the region, most likely from the Middle Pleistocene onwards. Lithic artefacts associated with well-stratified layers across various sites were observed and documented. By comparing similar sedimentary layers based on geomorphic contexts, a composite Quaternary stratigraphy has been developed for the region.

Pandey *et al*., *Man and Environment* L (1): 38-46 [2025].
ME-2025-1A04

5. Excavations at Sivagalai (2019-2022), Tamil Nadu

M. Prabakaran, T. Thangadurai, G. Victor Gnanaraj, R. Barathkumar, R. Sivanantham and K. Rajan

Sivagalai, an Iron Age habitation-cum-burial site, excavated across three seasons in 2019, 2020, and 2021, yielded crucial evidence in the form of scientific dates for the introduction of iron in south India, the production of paddy in the Tamiraparani river valley, and the date of the Tamili (Tamil Brahmi) script. The vast graveyards located in three localities, Sivagalai-parambu, Petmanagaram, and Srimoolakarai, and the associated habitation mounds in five localities, namely Valappalanpillai thiradu, Parakiramapandi-thiradu, Aavarangadu, Chekkadi, and Pottalkottai-thiradu, yielded a large number of urns and artefacts. In the graveyard, 160 urns were exposed with iron tools and white painted Black-and-Red ware. For high accuracy and universal credibility, five AMS and seven OSL dates from three different laboratories place the introduction of iron between 3000 BCE and 2500 BCE, though two dates 3259 BCE and 3345 BCE fall in the first quarter of the 4th millennium BCE. The paddy collected from Trench A2-

Urn No. 3 provided the date of cal. 1155 BCE. The sample collected from the strata yielding Tamil-Brahmi-inscribed potsherds at the habitation mound provided the date of cal. 685 BCE. Thus, the Sivagalai excavations provided important archaeological evidence that could change our hitherto held perception of the emergence of the Iron Age in south India.

Prabhakaran *et al*., *Man and Environment* L (1): 47-64 [2025].
ME-2025-1A05

6. A Preliminary Report on the Partial Collection of Human Skeletal Remains from Kondagai Excavation (2020), Tamil Nadu

Veena Mushrif-Tripathy, Mhachani Ovung, K. Rajan, R. Sivanantham, P. Baskar and M. Ramesh

The present paper deals with the preliminary study conducted on the partial collection of human skeletal remains from the site of Kondagai, Tamil Nadu. The site is used as a burial ground by the ancient inhabitants of Keeladi (Keezhadi), which is about 1 km away from the site. Carbon samples collected from the Keeladi excavations give a date of the 6th century BCE (580 BCE). As Kondagai is associated with Keeladi and is considered a clustered site of Kondagai, it therefore can be placed under the same time frame. In the present study, the authors describe the human skeletal remains excavated from the first season of Kondagai excavation (2020). The study was conducted at the Anthropology Laboratory at Deccan College Post Graduate Research Institution, Pune. The skeletal remains procured were all from a primary burial where the body was directly interred in an urn. Besides documenting the skeletal remains, demography, morphometry, and pathological observations were made. A total of thirteen individuals whose skeletal remains were found as studied. These included one child, seven middle-aged adults of whom four were male and three were female, and three young adults of whom one was male and two were female. Of the remaining two individuals' their gender and age determination, was not possible because of their partial preservation. Although several anomalies are found in the collection, arthritis and dental caries are the common lesions evident in most individuals, a triad of old age. During the excavation, samples were taken for DNA analysis at the Madurai Kamaraj University; the results are awaited

Mushrif-Tripathy *et al*., *Man and Environment* L (1): 65-82 [2025].
ME-2025-1A06

7. An Analysis of the Archaeozoological Remains (2005-2009) from the Early Historic Urban Site of Sisupalgarh, Odisha

Steven Ammerman

A joint team from the Deccan College Post Graduate and Research Institute and the University of California, Los Angeles, conducted excavations at the Early Historic urban centre of Sisupalgarh between 2005 and 2009. The faunal remains recovered during these excavations suggest a complex relationship between the human inhabitants of the city and the animals in their environment, which witnessed a change over the course of a millennium of occupation at the

site. Political, social, and religious changes over this period contributed to a shift in the animal economy of the city. The analysis conducted examines how the remains of animals deposited at the archaeological site reflect this change

Steven Ammerman, *Man and Environment* L (1): 83-94 [2025].
ME-2025-1A07

8. Animal Remains from Tokwa (2023-2024), Mirzapur District, Uttar Pradesh

P.P. Joglekar, Vikas Kumar Singh, Jennifer Bates, Manisha Singh and R.N. Singh

The Neolithic-Chalcolithic site of Tokwa, located in Mirzapur District, Uttar Pradesh, was excavated in the early 2000s by the University of Allahabad, Prayagraj. To gain a fresh insight into the chronology of the site and collect biological samples afresh, section cleaning excavations at Tokwa were carried out in 2023-2024 by a team of researchers from Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, and Seoul National University under the project titled Indica. Samples for palaeobotanical and archaeofaunal studies were collected from all cultural contexts (Neolithic, Transitional phase, and Chalcolithic). A total of 376 skeletal elements were studied, of which 285 were identifiable. The presence of wild and domestic mammals, birds, fish, and molluscs was attested at the site. The animal remains from the Neolithic contexts (n = 56) showed the presence of domestic cattle, dogs, porcupines, rats, hares, cattle egrets, rohu fish, and freshwater mussels. The material from the Chalcolithic contexts (n = 33) revealed remains of cattle and other species such as sheep and goats, spotted deer, barking deer, and two freshwater molluscs (Corbicula sp. and Bellamya sp.). The material from the transitional phase revealed the presence of many other species, such as sambar deer, wild pig, and common crane. These findings were compared with the findings of the earlier excavations.

Joglekar *et al*., *Man and Environment* L (1): 95-101 [2025].
ME-2025-2A08

9. Recent Discovery of Megaliths in Umred Tehsil, Nagpur District, Maharashtra

Devyani Meghare and Shantanu Vaidya

The megaliths of Vidarbha have evidenced complex mortuary practices and cultural expressions of Iron Age and Early Historic communities in the central part of India. Although there are prominent sites like Pauni, Adam, Nagbhir, and Takalghat Khapa nearby, the tehsils of Umred, Bhiwapur, and Pauni (in the Bhandara District) are still mainly unexplored and understudied in terms of the megalithic culture of Vidarbha. The current study looks at the types, locations, and importance of megalithic structures and Early Iron Age habitation sites in the Umred Tehsil, Nagpur District, augmenting new outcomes from the recent explorations (2023-24). The discovery of these new sites not only broadens the field for future research on megalithism but also poses fresh queries regarding megalithic traditions, particularly in the Vidarbha region.

Meghare and Vaidya, *Man and Environment* L (1): 102-109 [2025].
ME-2025-1A09

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