

PREHISTORIC FAUNA EXCAVATED FROM HATIKRA DISTRICT, BIRBHUM, WEST BENGAL, INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

The department of Archaeology of the Vishva Bharati University, Santiniketan, West Bengal brought us some collection of animal remains excavated from a village called 'HATIKRA' in the year 1985 for study and identification.

Hatikra (Latitude 23° 49' N., Longitude 87° 35' E.) is situated 24 Km. away from Bolepur station by the side of Bolepur Siuri Road. It is a small village adjacent to village Ferry and on the bank of river Bakreswar. The village encompassed by Ushagram, Palsila, Parbatipur and Jinaipur etc., falls under the post office of Gadadharpur in Siuri Police Station of Birbhum. The excavation at the site was done during 1984, which revealed two Cultural sequences from Chalcolithic to Iron age culture dated 1200 B.C. to 700 B.C. Altogether four trenches were dug, viz., HTR-1, HTR-2, HTR-3 and HTR-4. Majority of the animal remains ofcourse were collected from HTR-4.

A total of 31 animal remains were identified, majority of which belong to *Bos indicus* Linn, next is *Bubalus bubalis* (Linn.). Other species viz., *Chitra indica* (Gray), *Capra hircus aegagrus* Erxl. and *Sus scrofa cristatus* Wagner are represented by one example of each.

The skeletal remains are all fragmentary and unsuitable for measurement. Some remains have chopped marks, indicating they were slaughtered.

The identified species with their systematic positions and the archaeological data are listed and tabulated (See Table 1 & 2).

DESCRIPTION

The animal remains excavated from the site of Hatikra were compared with the recent specimens of the same species present in the Prehistoric Zoology Section of the Zoological Survey of India and were found similar in characteristic features and size.

DISCUSSION

From the Systematic account, we find that the species represented in this collection are *Chitra indica* Gray, *Bos indicus* Linn., *Bubalus bubalis* (Linn), *Capra*

Table shows the identified specimens unearthed from the site of Hatikra, Birbhum, West Bengal.

Sl. No.	Name of the Species Scientific Common name	Class	Order	Family	Site	Locus	Depth	Date	Archaeo-logical data	Detail of the Specimen	No. of ex.	Remarks
1.	<i>Chitra indica</i> (Gray) River Turtle	Reptilia	Testudines	Trionychidae	HTR-4	TR-41, Qd-1	68 cm.	—	—	Fragment of hypoplastron.	1 ex.	
2.	<i>Bos indicus</i> Linn. Domestic humped cattle	Mammalia	Artiodactyla	Bovidae	HTR-1	TR-8, Qd-III	17 cm.	4.3.85	B ² 7.51 × C ² 2.18	Left lower 1st & 2nd molar.	1 ex.	
"	"	"	"	"	HTR-2	TR-B1, Qd-1	—	5.3.85	B ⁴ 4.10 × 1.65 × 9cm	Broken lower 1st molar.	1 ex.	of juvenile
"	"	"	"	"	HTR-2	TR-B1, Qd-2	68 cm.	14.3.85	—	Head of the right femur.	1 ex.	
"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	—	Fragment of the Shaft of femur.	1 ex.	
"	"	"	"	"	HTR-4	—	70 cm.	11.3.85	—	Fragment of the Proximal part of mandible.	1 ex.	
"	"	"	"	"	"	TR-A1, Qd-1	1.32 mm.	18.3.85	—	Fragment of rib.	1 ex.	With Chopped mark.
"	"	"	"	"	"	"	1.57 cm.	22.3.85	—	"	1 ex.	
"	"	"	"	"	"	"	1.39 cm.	19.3.85	A ¹ 1.77 cm	"	1 ex.	
"	"	"	"	"	"	TR-B1, Qd-III	30 cm.	20.3.85	—	Fragment of tooth.	1 ex.	
"	"	"	"	"	"	TR-A1, Qd-1	1.35 cm.	28.3.85	—	Fragment of rib.	1 ex.	
"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	—	Proximal end of 1st Phalanx.	1 ex.	
"	"	"	"	"	"	"	1.53 cm.	"	—	Lower 1st & 2nd molar.	1 ex.	

Table shows the identified specimens unearthed from the site of Hatikra, Birbhum, West Bengal.

Sl. No.	Name of the Species Scientific Name	Class	Order	Family	Site	Locus	Depth	Date	Archaeo-logical data	Detail of the specimen	No. of ex.	Remarks
"	"	"	"	"	"	TR-B1, Qd-III	—	—	—	proximal portion of left metatarsal.	1 ex.	
3.	<i>Bos</i> . Sp.	"	"	"	"	TR-XA1, Qd-I	1.05 cm.	27.3.85	—	Broken piece of tooth.	1 ex.	
"	"	"	"	"	"	TR-B1, Qd-I	1.10 cm.	—	—	Distal end of Shaft of metatarsal.	1 ex.	With Chopped mark.
4.	<i>Bubalus bubalis</i> Linn.	Domestic Buffalo	Mammalia	Artiodactya	Bovidae	HTR-2 TR-B1, Qd-I	—	5.3.85	B14.10x	Right lower 2nd premolar	1 ex.	
"	"	"	"	"	"	TR-B1, Qd-IV	30 cm.	9.3.85	—	Condylar portion of metacarpal.	1 ex.	
"	"	"	"	"	"	TR-B1, Qd-IV	30 cm.	9.3.85	—	Condylar portion with the Coronoid process of mandible.	1 ex.	
"	"	"	"	"	"	HTR-4 TR-XA1, Qd-I	1.35 cm.	20.3.85	—	Proximal fragment of the Shaft of tibia with distal end.	1 ex.	
"	"	"	"	"	"	TR-XA1	1.05 cm.	—	—	Proximal portion of Shaft of femur.	1 ex.	
"	"	"	"	"	"	TR-A1, Qd-I	—	25.3.85	—	Proximal portion of Shaft of femur.	1 ex.	
5.	<i>Capra hircus</i> <i>aegagrus</i> Erxleben	Domestic Goat	"	"	"	TT, TR-A1,	30 cm.	19.3.85	—	Broken piece of rib	1 ex.	Chopped from the middle.

Table (Contd.)

Sl. No.	Name of the Species Scientific Common name	Order	Family	Site	Locus	Depth	Date	Archaeo-logical data	Detail of the specimen	No. of ex.	Remarks
6.	Specimen tentatively identified as bovine remains (Genus and Species undetermined)	"	"	HTR-2	TR-B1, Qd-1	65 cm.	15.3.85	—	Fragment of humerus.	1 ex.	Chopped from the base.
		"	"	"	"	59 cm.	—	—	Fragment of the Shaft of Limb bone.	1 ex.	Chopped mark on the side and at middle.
		"	"	HTR-4	TT,	90 cm.	15.3.85	—	Fragment of Limb bone.	1 ex.	
		"	"	"	TT-A1, Qd-1	1.43 cm. to 11.57 cm.	22.3.85	—	Fragment of Shaft of Limb bone	1 ex.	Chopped on the side.
		"	"	"	TR-A1, Qd-1	69 cm.	24.3.85	—	Fragment of a Limb bone.	1 ex.	
		"	"	"	"	2.30 cm.	27.3.85	—	Broken piece of tooth.	1 ex.	
7.	<i>Sus scrofa</i> The Indian <i>cristatus</i> Wagner Boar	"	Suidae	"	"	1.32 cm.	18.3.85	—	Right astragalus	1 ex.	

hircus aegagrus Erxl., *Sus scrofa cristatus* Wagner and some Bovid bones. Barring the first one, all the other species mentioned above are domesticated animals. Similar remains of demesticated animals were recorded earlier from a number of other prehistoric sites in India.

The cultural sequence of the site i.e. Chalcolithic to Iron age tallies those found at Bharatpur, in Burdwan District (Banerjee, 1981), and Mahisdal on the bank of river Kopai in Birbhum (Banerjee, in press).

It appears that during the Chalcolithic phase, the people practised mixed economy of food gathering-cum-agriculture as is evident from the occurence of a number of domestic animals like *Bos indicus*, *Bubalus bubalis*, *Capra hircus aegagrus* and *Sus scrofa cristatus*. They also used to practice fishing is proved by the remains of *Chitra indica*.

After studing this collection, it may be concluded that a number of prehistoric settlement in Birbhum, Bankura and Burdwan of West Bengal had experienced late stage of animal domestication during the Chalcolithic and Iron age.

SUMMARY

This paper deals with a small collection of animal remains excavated from Chalcolithic site at Hatikra. District Birbhum in West Bengal explored by Vishva Bharati University, Santiniketan. The study reveals the occurrence of five species of domesticated mammals and one species of river turtle, the chopping marks on some of the bones indicate positive sign of flesh consumption and it is also apparent that the people in the site, during the phase (Chalcolithic to Iron age : 1200 B.C. to 700 B.C.) already reached the stage of fulfilled animal firming.

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