

THE GEO-ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE
RECONSTRUCTION OF PAST – EXPLORATION FROM
THE SAGORE ISLAND, WEST BENGAL, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Stratified archaeological evidences from the Neolithic age to Pal-Sena period in the Sagore island of Sundarban provide the evidence for evolution of geographical environment. We can make relationship between the history of local topography and distribution of ancient settlement on the basis of different archaeological evidence, viz- ancient name of many geographical features and land, old terms of ethnic groups mention in early literature, description of pilgrimage route etc. Sapkhali and Mandirtala of Sagore Island have significant antiquity because of existence of proto-historic sculpture and Neolithic stone. To the extreme of the north-western part along the bank of present day Hooghly river (Mandirtala, Sapkhali) is the exposor of Neolithic civilization, again at the south-western site there is an excavation site of historical remains of relatively younger age (320AD – 750AD) and most of the eastern part of island is most younger in age (750 AD – 1250AD).

The NW side belong to the period of 4000 YBP, SW part belong to the period of 2300 YBP and most of the eastern side of island belong to the period of 1300 YBP-800YBP as dated by different researcher and govt. organization in the past. Thus a continues settlement process found from Neolithic to pal-sena period but this is interesting that no evidence were found to support for settlement existence in between 1230AD to 1400AD.

The importance of such studies has to be stressed because only by dwelling on this themes that the ancient “Sagoredwip” own perception of there can be reconstructed and filled up with the rivers, forest, political unit, people gathering and other geographical features that we see today.

KEY WORDS: - *archaeological evidence, ancient civilization, geographical reconstruction, antiquities of land.*

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INTRODUCTION: -Sagore Island is situated in the North-West part of the Sundarban having a size of delta. Having enriched with the water of the holy Ganges it remain silent having the evidences of great history in his heart. From the very beginning of her birth the Sundarban including the Sagore island was not enriched with such a great number of rivers, tanks and jungles. In our great ancient “Purana” and in the great Sanskrit literature it has been mentioned that there was a prosperous and civilized city in the confluence of the “Gangasagara”. At the beginning of the 18th century during the time of land reclamation the discovery of archaeological evidences proves the antiquity this land as well as human existence in the surrounding area.

A great number of archaeological evidences were discovered from the Sagore Island, the most important place in the Sundarban. From the archaeological point of view. Scraper of Neolithic age was found from Mandirtala, located on the east bank of the river Hooghly. Besides in Sapkhali, Mansadwip, Fuldubi, Bamankhali, Dublat and from other surrounding places the ancient archaeological evidences like pottery pot, lamp, seal engraved with ancient Bengali alphabet, etc are the living evidence of Neolithic and Mourya Era to Pal-Sena period.

The dwelling place of the holy saint Kopil muni and the holy land of Hindu religion have a present area of 358 sq. Kilometer. The morphological structure and the area of said land are constantly being evaluated from the historical time for the reason of siltation, tidal flooding, shoreline shifting, channel decay etc.

The main aim and objectives of the present research work focus on the determination and reconstruction of past geomorphological depositional surface and the process of evolution of the land through the scientific analysis of available archaeological evidences, mapping, explanation from geomorphology etc., we should not forget that “present is the key to the past”.

Location and physical settings of study area

Sagar Island is located in south 24 Paragana district of West Bengal state in India. Which geographical extension is 20°36'N to 21°56'N and 88°02'E to 88°11' E. river Hooghly flow in west and Muriganga river in east. Southern part is encircled by Bay of Bengal. Tidal channels are creating network in entire of island. Average altitude is about 3 meter from mean sea level. It is a coastal low land area with swampy mangrove environment.

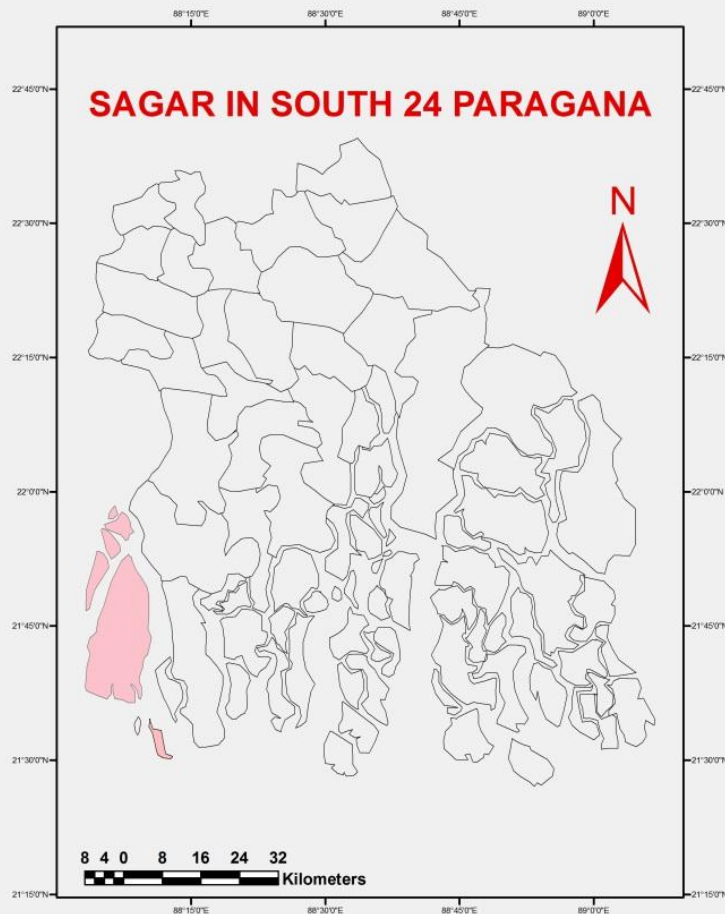


Figure.1: Location map of study area

Methods

Present geomorphological features and available archaeological evidences take a major role for reconstructing the past geomorphological surface and evaluation of the Sagore island. For fulfilling this job field study played an important factor, through field field survey, examine the sites and situation of investigated areas, taking the perception of the local people, especially the old people who are inhabited here for a long time and views and vista of adjacent areas. Except field survey some secondary data also used from many authentic source, viz- Topographical map of SOI, analyzing of satellite map, using different documents and collecting archaeological data from different local museums, taking help from literature study, analyzing historical map of

study area and through those processes, past geomorphological changes and existence of past civilization in Sagore island can be determined.

Archaeological places of Sagore Island in different Historical time phase

The present state of Sagore Island is full of jungles and swamps are not the fit for human habitation, but it is the gem of gems from the context of archaeology. Archaeological evidences explored from this region are testimony of Chalcolithic, Mourya to Pala-Sena period. Archaeological evidences in this area have been unearthed by the process of digging oh ponds, tanks etc., and natural erosion process of the coastal belt. The archaeological evidences discovered from the surrounding areas of Sagore Island can be broadly classified in three categories for discussion, viz-

2000BC to 320BC: The archaeological evidences of this time phase are scraper of Neolithic era (kharimuseaum), motivated potteries, proto historic portrait of Mahakala, Phallus motive (Kashinagarmuseaum), thousands of beads, non-AryansMatrika portrait etc.

Above mention evidences are found from Mandirtala and Sapkhali area (figure-2).

320BC to 750AD: So many archaeological evidences of this historical phase, such as terracotta pot, garlands of beads(Figure – 8), inscription seal of ancient Bengali alphabet(Figure-7), cowrie(Figure-9), terracotta Ganesha are found from Kochuberia, Fuldubi, Manasadwip, Bamankhali, SapkhaliMandirtalaetc (figure-2).

750AD to 1250AD: different archaeological evidences in this historical era are – designed and square brick (Figure-6), sculpture of Bishnu and Surya made by black stone, terracotta pot, vessels (Figure-5-A), etc. were found in many numbers from the entireSagore Island(figure-2).

Reconstruction of past geomorphological depositional surface

Actually morphological structure and shape of Sagore Island which seen at present was not the same in far past period. Before 4000 to 5000 years there was only some patches of Island which were separated by vast water body also, due to action of continuous tidal flooding and siltation process deposited materials were gathered and surface of Island were expand towards different side, there for large water bodies were become smaller and islands were become closed to each other and mangrove swamps were formed in the contact zone between land and salt water body. Result of this process was surface emergent accumulation which produces a bigger surface, usually drainage also decayed gradually.

From the above map(figure-3) it can be seen that first depositional surface(D1) was formed at the North-Western part of Sagore Island (Sapkhal to Mandirtala area) which also expanded towards different side due to deposition process and make D2 and D3surface(figure-3) . From the context of archaeological evidence where D1 surface(Sapkhali to Mandirtala area) was formed is the most ancient(2000 BC to 320BC), but D2 and D3 depositional surface layers were formed in subsequent archaeological period of 320 BC to 750AD and 780 AD to 1250 AD respectively(figure-3). There for it can be said after analyzing and mapping of archaeological evidences that geomorphological evaluation of Sagore Island is- Single Island to some patches of Islands (D2 & D3 in figure-3), and last of all a total island was formed.

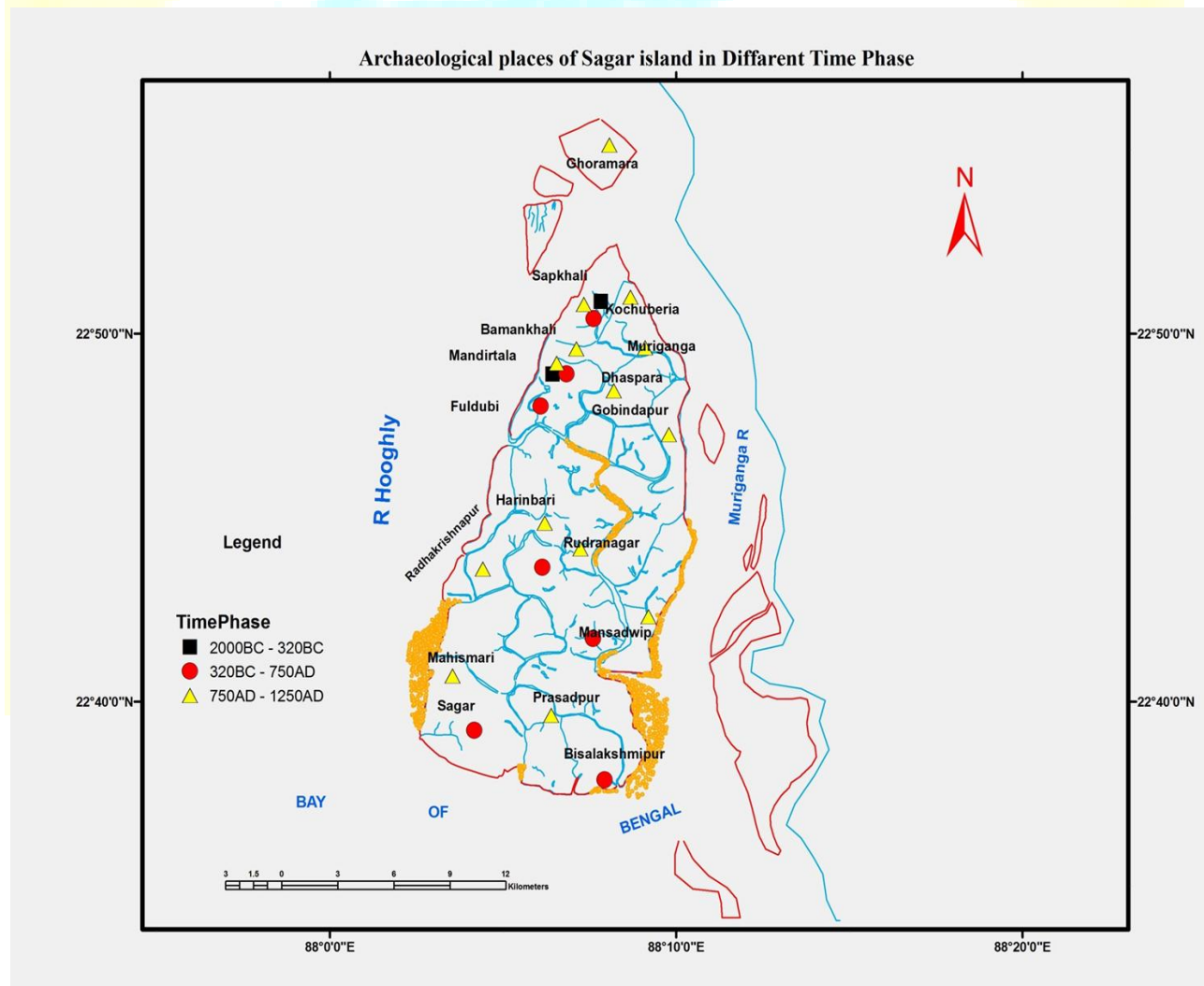


Figure.2:Archaeological places in Sagore Island in different time phase.

Discussion and conclusion

In what way the evaluation of human habitation can be justify on the basis of archaeological evidences unearthed from a particular place, likely history of geomorphological evaluation can also be explain by analyzing those archaeological evidences. Such as at the North-West part of Sagore Island, from Sapkhali to Mandirtala region (figure-2), where most ancient evidences were found, there for a single patch of Island(D1 in, figure-3) was formed in very first time(about 4000 years ago). In the end phase of Neolithic age or early phases of Chalcolithic age from when civilization process was started and settlement of ancient people was established for trading purpose on the comparative high land parts of entire Sagore Island. After that by natural law so many patches of island were formed due to depositional work of tidal flooding and those patches of Island carried archaeological evidences of subsequent historical era. In this way the D1 (figure-3) depositional surface was characterized with the most ancient historical periods (2000BC to 320BC), which was formed about 4000 years ago. Similarly D2 (figure-3) depositional surface was formed about 2300 years ago and D3(figure-3) depositional surface was formed about 1300 years ago. In this way evaluation of past geomorphological surface could be reconstructed on the basis of archaeological evidences found from Sagore Island.

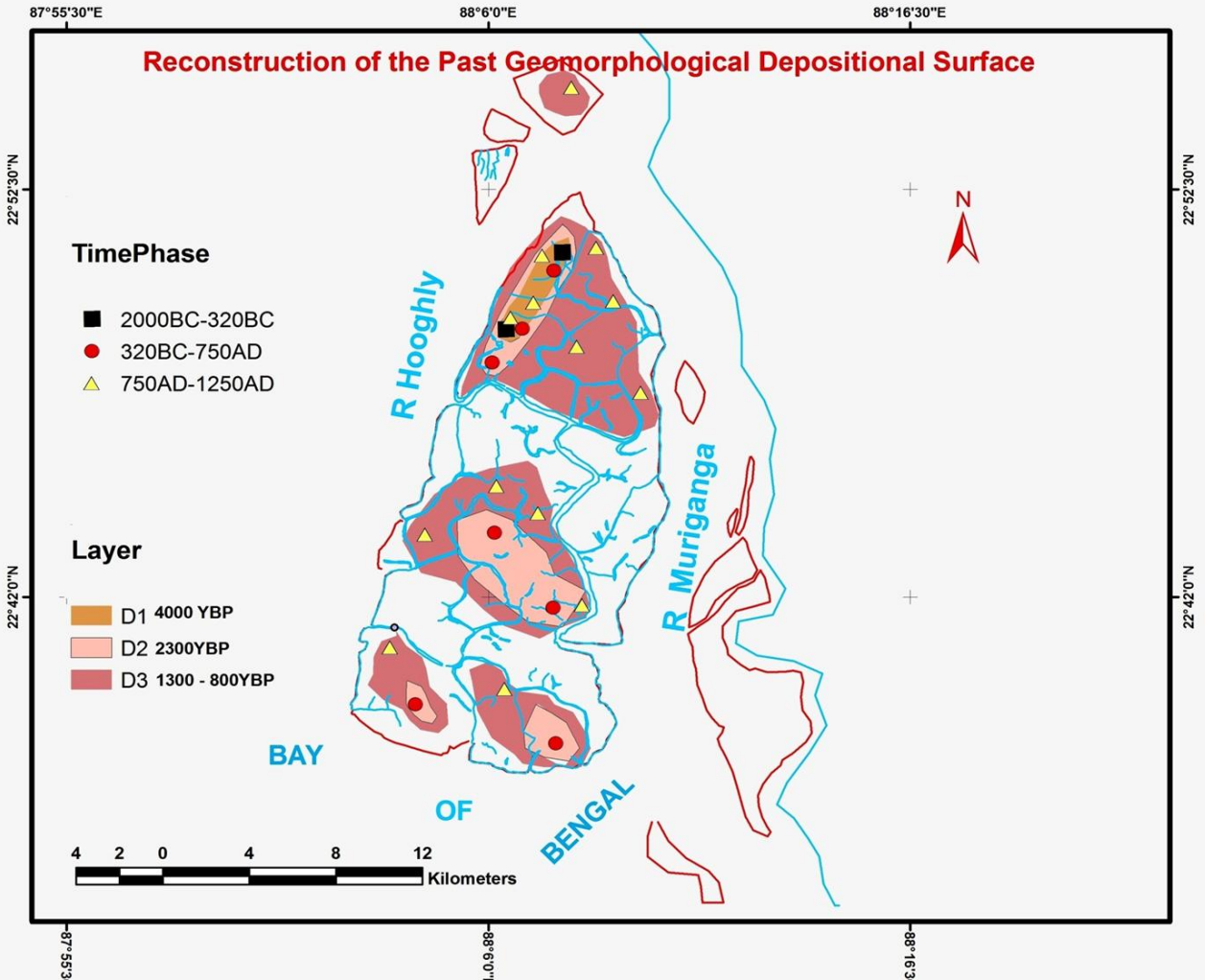


Figure.3: Reconstruction of the past geomorphological depositional surface of Sagore Island



Figure.4: terracotta portraits& toy.



Figure.5:A) water jars, B) terracotta portrait, C) toy brick.



Figure.6: design



Figure-7:Inscription of ancient Bengali alphabet.



Figure – 8: Garlands of beads.



Figure-9: Ancient Cowries in a pot.

Figure.4, 5, 6, 7,8&9:Showing Some Photographs of archaeological evidences explored from Sagore Island.

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