

If Pots Could Speak: Technological Studies of Pre-historic Pottery from Panr

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The area under consideration, right from the earliest phase, that is, Epi-palaeolithic and Mesolithic to Neolithic and Chalcolithic have been in close cultural contacts with the surrounding regions, especially the Vindhya. Recent excavations have thrown new light on the early farming culture of the area. Even though one finds such striking examples of human habitation and cultural evolution over a large period of prehistory, no one has really attempted a study to understand the everyday lives of ordinary people who lived and engaged in activities of those days.

An attempt will be made to understand the complexities of the pottery production to see how the shift from handmade pottery to wheel made gets reflected archaeologically, the changes that accompany this shift, in types, possible clay preparation techniques, firing, designs and so forth. A second phase of analysis, where contextual information is available, will be to try and understand how these changes affected the social relations within and without a potter household and beyond.

Research Methodologies and the Representative Sample

The present study focuses on technological data from pottery assemblages with clear chronological and stylistic patterns. Prior to this research, technological studies of Early Neolithic pottery from the middle Ganga Plains region was largely analyzed as en bloc (Sharma *et al.* 1980; Chakrabarti 1999; Tewari *et al.* 2004-05; Tewari *et al.* 1998-99; Misra, Pal and Gupta 2004), with little or no chronological subdivisions. This approach proved useful in comparing Neolithic and later Chalcolithic or Early Historic pottery sequences and organizations, but failed to capture the internal variability within the Neolithic period. The study presented here provides an opportunity to analyze production phases within the Early Neolithic and compare different decorative styles.

Technological and stylistic data from the Neolithic-Chalcolithic phases from the site of PaGr were analyzed from four different phases in Period I. The assemblages were attributed to one of 4 phases and the results of decorative and motif analyses could be compared to the technological attributes we identified. The analysis was guided by the *chaîne opératoire* and divided into 'public' and 'private' attributes. These are attributes that are equally important in the production sequence of the vessel, but differ in their implications for contemporary perceptions of pottery. Specifically, some steps of the production sequence are known only to the potter, such as the size and sorting of inclusions, whereas everyone can see others like surface finish and firing atmosphere. This distinction is important when

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