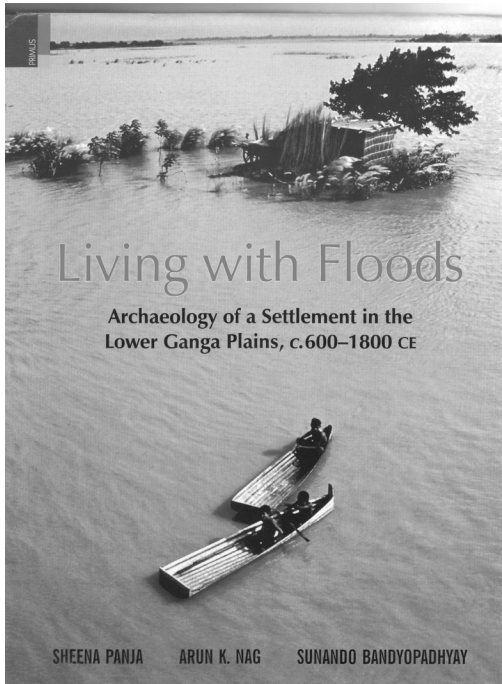


Book Review

Living with Floods: Archaeology of a Settlement in Lower Ganga Plains

By - Sheena Panja, Arun K. Nag and Sunando Bandyopadhyay ,Primus Books, Delhi. Pages 292, price Rs.1900



The nature and character of archaeological sites in flood prone areas in India especially those from Ganga plains are probably less investigated as it is assumed that they do not yield any valid cultural information. On this background, study pertaining to the archaeology of Balupur in the lower Ganga plains (c 600 – 1800 CE) by Sheena Panja, Arun Nag and Sunando Bandyopadhyay titled ” Living with Floods: Archaeology of a Settlement in Lower Ganga Plains” is a welcome addition to the literature on explorations and excavations at such sites.

The book very effectively describes how culture has thrived and prospered in Balupur village in lower Ganga plain which is inundated by periodic floods. It gives a very clear idea of high biological productivity of floodplain, high fertility of soils and overall economy of the region.

The cultural history of the ancient division of Varendra region between 7th and 19th centuries CE and the nature of settlements, subsistence and diverse forms of strategies adopted by people in the land of shifting rivers is discussed very well in the book.

The site of Balapur in Ganga-Mahananda interfluvial area survived for more than 1200 years in the region prone to periodic but low intensity floods. The book tries to understand how such settlements are created and function in a land where human lives are controlled by the shifting rivers and where people are constantly living with floods.

The text of the book is well supplemented by relevant appendices giving account of entire faunal material recovered from all trenches excavated between 2005 and 2008 at Balupur, the results of osteological analysis of the skeletal material of human remains from the site, archaeo-chemistry of the deposits and their significance in

understanding and reconstructing geological environment of the site and report of phytolith analysis etc.

The book is a holistic exercise combining the expertise of many disciplines involving Archaeology, Geography, Geomorphology, Zoology, Botany, Sedimentology, and Paleoanthropology, seeking to understand the interaction between changes in the landscape and various aspects of cultural adaptation in a zone where humans are constantly living with floods and shifting river courses, as emphasized by authors themselves.

The maps, tables, figures and plates included in the book with special focus on excavations at Balupur site are really of a very good quality and do help in making the subject matter more attractive and informative and easy to understand. The work consists of detailed geomorphic account of Balupur, its present day landscape, excavations, paleolandscape, cultural

sequence and composite stratigraphy. The analysis of pottery and other artefacts and the evidence from pottery to suggest that Balupur is a preserved, multicultural habitation is also included in the work. An important contribution of this book is the study of fluvial environment of this region using rare maps, satellite images and field studies.

On the whole it is a convincing exercise and shows that an archaeological study of settlements remains incomplete without an understanding of the geomorphic context and the diachronic changes in the landscape. It is a well investigated and illustrated book written in a lucid style and therefore highly recommended.

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