Continuity and Survival of Neolithic Traditions in Northeastern India

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ARCHAEOLOGICALLY, Northeastern India is considered *terra incognita,* as little systematic work had been done so far on a scale comparable to that in other parts of India in particular and the outside world in general. Nevertheless, the pioneering efforts of Godwin-Austin (1875) and Cockburn (1879) in the last century and Brown (1917), Hutton (1928), Mills (1933), Haimendorf (1943, 1945), Worman (1949), Goswami, and Bhagabati (1959) in this century have brought to light the widespread occurrence of the Neolithic phase in the region. A sustained and detailed descriptive analysis of the surface collection of Neolithic tools preserved at Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, and the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge, was made by Dani (1960), though many of his conclusions cannot be accepted as valid in the light of the most recent studies (Sankalia 1974). The excavation at Daojali Hading (Sharma 1967) revealed a Neolithic phase which yielded celts and typical cord-marked pottery associated together in a stratified deposit.

Modern Northeastern India (Fig. 1) includes five states and two union territories; namely, Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh. These political divisions were created to facilitate the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic aspirations of the people. This frontier region, lying between latitudes 22°0′N to 29°30′N and longitudes 89°40′E to 97°20′E, is bounded on the north by the sub-Himalayan ranges of Bhutan and Tibet, on the east by Burma, on the south by Bangladesh, and on the west by Bengal, which is the only line of communication with the rest of India.

Here in this region one meets with a bewildering variety of languages and dialects, no less than 200 in all. Each of them is confined to its own ecological niche separated by deep gorges, high hills, and dense forests. The physiographic

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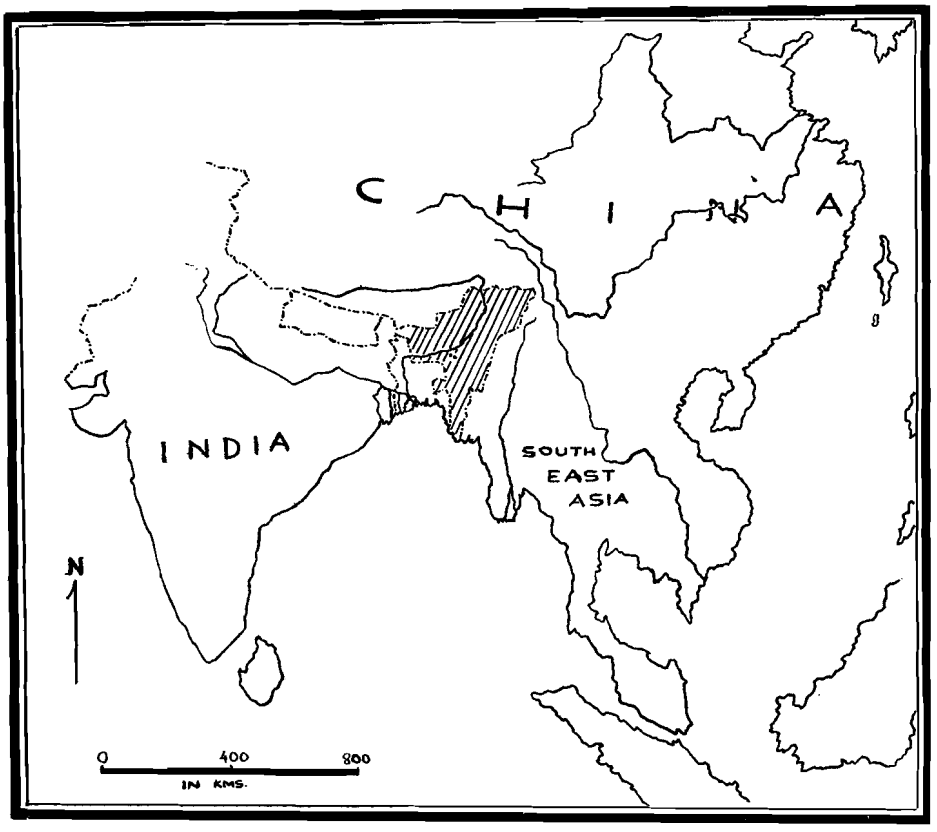


Fig. 1 Northeastern India (oblique-lined area).

peculiarities obtaining in this region render it almost unique, with few parallels elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent. In Northeastern India, this factor has contributed to a great extent to the continuity and survival of societies marked by an incipient farming economy and simple technology halted by occasional marginal change from the prehistoric past down to the present.

This paper will attempt to bring into clear focus cultural continuity, change, and parallels in this region by an analysis of the ethnographic present as well as linguistic and archaeological evidence. The archaeological evidence incorporated here is based on the excavations recently carried out by the author at two sites in the study region.

The numerous societies in Northeastern India have adapted themselves to the physical environment by means of separate technologies. Because of the sharp contrasts manifested by this environment, it is proposed to study the cultures of the region within the framework of the geographical concepts of areas of attraction, areas of isolation, and areas of relative isolation (Subbarao 1958) for a better understanding of the physiographic peculiarities of the region and their bearing on cultural continuity and survival.

Divided geographically, the Brahmaputra Valley, covering an area about 700 km long and 80 km wide, with its fertile alluvial plains and communication lines along

the river, forms an area of attraction, or nuclear area. The hill ranges and gorges beyond, with their vegetation supported by high rainfall (the highest rainfall of 1397 cm was recorded at Mawsynram in Meghalaya), can be classified as areas of isolation. The intervening hilly zones in close proximity to the valley are referred to here as areas of relative isolation.

ETHNOGRAPHIC PRESENT

The people dwelling in the nuclear area are the predominantly Assamese-speaking caste Hindus whose cultural development is characterized by relative complexity. Their economy is based on surplus food production by using traction plough in the irrigated fields to grow paddy, sugarcane, and other crops. The farm and household equipment is manufactured by the specialized smiths within the community. Linguistically and culturally, these people are more akin to those inhabiting the Ganges Valley, a nucleus of ancient civilization lying toward the west, than they are to the peoples of Southeast Asia in the east. Relatively recent migrants from the east, particularly the Shan or Tai Ahoms, have been completely assimilated into the culture of the Brahmaputra Valley. Here in this region flourished the ancient historical kingdoms of Kamarup (Choudhury 1966).

In the areas of isolation live the hill people, who are grouped under two linguistic subgroups: the Mon-Khmer and the Tibeto-Burman. To the former group belong the Khasis; to the latter, the Naga, Kuki-Chin, and Bodo. Each is further subdivided into a number of dialects, and the subgroups are called after the dialect they speak, such as the Garo, the Mikir, the Kachari, and many others. A special feature of these linguistic groups is that none of them has a script of its own. Put together, all of these groups enjoy a uniform level of cultural development inasmuch as they share a similar physiography. Their economy in general is based on *jhuming*, or shifting cultivation, which is in fact a system closely adjusted to the conditions of the terrain they live in. The agricultural implements required for *jhuming* and the corresponding household articles are simple, and a close observation reveals the similarity with artifacts of the Neolithic phase; the only difference in some cases is the material used. Presently, digging hoes are made of iron, but in form and shape they are perfect replicas of the Neolithic shouldered celts. The traction plough is not in vogue. The food production achieved by the digging hoe technique obviously puts a limit on output, which is further aggravated by the thick, fast growth of vegetation. Input—in the manner of man-hours invested in relation to the food production—is enormously higher than in the nuclear areas. The *jhuming* practiced in this region demands constant shifting of the land for fresh plots requiring repeated clearing of forests. As a result, the people in the areas of isolation remain at the subsistence level. Hunting and fishing supplement their means of livelihood.

In the areas of relative isolation also live the same hill people of the preceding group sharing the same hill tracts. They have, however, been subjected to a limited degree of acculturation by virtue of their close proximity to the alluvial plains, where the relatively advanced culture prevails.

The Khasis, one of the important hill societies, belong to the Mongoloid stock and speak a language of the Mon-Khmer linguistic group that still exists in Burma and Cambodia. The Khasis are distinguished by their matrilineal system, in which

property is handed down from the mother to her youngest daughter and authority goes from the mother's brother to sister's son in the *iing* or family (Gurdon 1975). The eldest maternal uncle, therefore, enjoys a predominant position. Khasis trace their origin to their primeval ancestress *ka Iawbai* ('grandmother').

Jhuming is the mainstay of the Khasis besides lowland agriculture and use of the traction plough to a very limited extent. In the first stage of *jhuming*, vegetation on the gently sloping hills is cut and allowed to dry before it is burnt. The seeds are broadcast or dibbled over the ashes with the digging hoe. This implement, as mentioned earlier, is strictly similar to the shouldered stone celt of the Stone Age. Paddy, millet, potato, and maize are among the important crops raised by the *jhuming* method. Wet cultivation using the plough is rare and is confined to the Sung Valley. Orange and betel nut orchards are the major cash crops. The agricultural implements and techniques on the whole are crude, leading to low productivity when compared with that of the alluvial plains in the nuclear area.

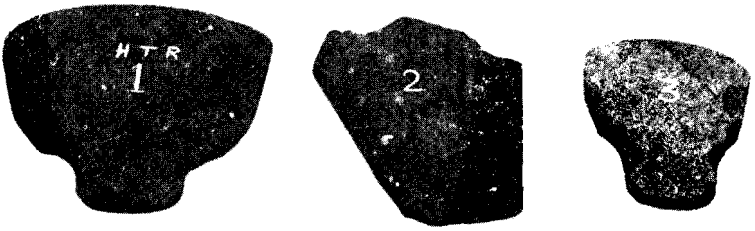
Pottery for the entire Khasi society is manufactured at Larnai, a village potters' community (Plate I*a*). Over 20 different types of vessels required for the kitchen, storage, liquor preparation, and rituals are all fashioned only by hand by the women. A variety of black clay, collected from the Sung Valley, is tempered with fine granitic stone granules. Two parts of a vessel are made in the beginning and joined together with the wooden beater while they are leather-hard. The pottery is fully dried and then fired in the open kiln. The forms of pottery include spouted vessels, dishes on stands, bowls with lids, smoking pipes, globular vessels with high necks, elongated cylindrical vessels with wide mouths, and flower vases. A thin film of brown color made from the bark of a tree called *sohliya* is applied with a brush before firing. The surfaces of the exterior and interior are plain without decoration. The fabric of the pottery is thick and, on the whole, crude. The Khasis also use metalware on a small scale.

An interesting feature of the Khasi society is the erection of memorial stones which span time and space, a living tradition in some cases. Gurdon (1975) divided them into (a) menhirs or vertical stones (Plate I*b*); (b) table stones or dolmens; and (c) stone cromlechs or chamber tombs: all of them of various dimensions. The tallest monolith at Nartiang measures 820 cm high, 76 cm thick, and 202 cm broad (Plate I*c*). Numerically, the stones are clustered in an uneven number. These monoliths are mostly dedicated to deceased ancestors. Cremation is the usual method of disposal of the dead. The ashes and the uncalcined bones are collected and deposited in the clan chamber tombs or cromlechs.

Excavations

The author carried out excavations at the two sites of Sarutaru and Marakdola in this region during 1971–1974. Sarutaru, a Neolithic site, and Marakdola, a post-Neolithic site, are located at about a kilometer's distance from each other. They are situated in the area bordering the Khasi Hills on the south and Kamarup District on the north. Excavation of both sites yielded cultural evidence pertaining to the theme of this paper, and hence an attempt is made to enumerate the results of Neolithic Sarutaru first and post-Neolithic Marakdola later, as they follow culturally and chronologically in that order.

Plate I *a*, Khasi potters' community, Larnai; *b*, menhirs at Marakdola; *c*, monoliths at Nartiang.



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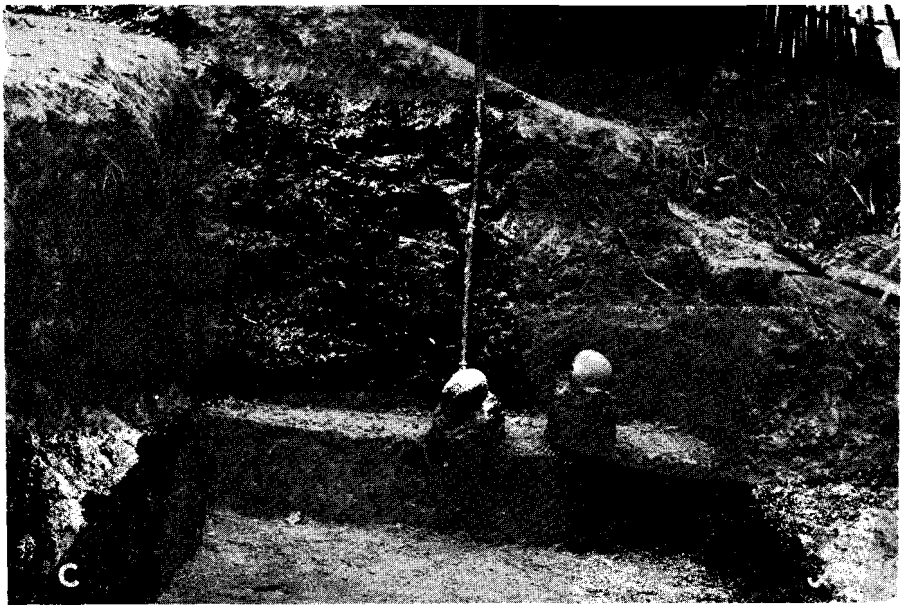

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Plate II *a*, shouldered celts, Sarutaru; *b*, Marakdola site; *c*, pottery *in situ*, Marakdola.

Sarutaru: A Neolithic Site

Sarutaru (26°N, 91.8°E) is a hamlet dotted with low hillocks relieved by alluvial patches in between. The site is located on a hillock about 125 m high. Geologically, this area is a part of the Shillong Plateau or, rather, it is situated on the periphery, where the plateau merges with the plains of the Brahmaputra Valley on the north. Flanking its north is the river Digaru, a tributary of the Brahmaputra. The surface of the hillock is formed by the brown soil with morrum which is derived from the decomposition of the rock due to prolonged precipitation and the consequent growth of dense tropical rain forest. The area comes under the high rainfall zone, receiving 200 cm annually, just as physiographically it is situated between the high (Shillong, 244 cm) and the low (Gauhati, 172 cm) rainfall areas.

Three trenches measuring 3 m square were laid and dug to a depth of 65 cm, where virgin soil was struck. The excavation revealed a single cultural horizon at a depth of 20 cm from the surface and continued up to a depth of 53 cm, after which it was sterile. Composed of brown to blackish soil, this layer was covered on the top by humus. The cultural relics recovered from the excavation include ground stone celts and potsherds. The stratigraphy (Fig. 2) and the archaeological evidence from the three trenches are similar, with no marked differences. In all three trenches, carbon material of burnt wood was encountered up to a depth of 53 cm. This carbonized wood was evidently the result of burning vegetation in the course of *jhuming*.

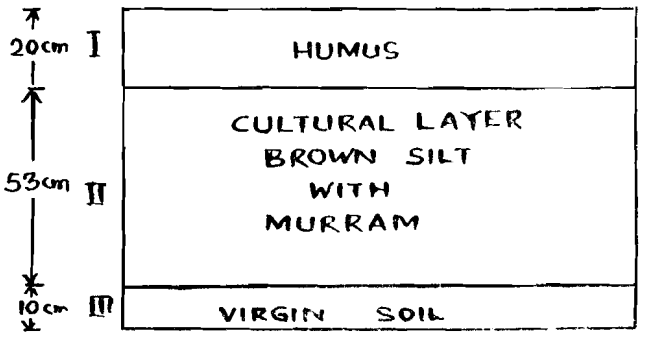

Fig. 2 Sarutaru stratigraphic section.

The stone industry comprised ground stone celts recovered from the excavation. These were made on slate of dark grey color and sandstone of cream to buff color. The tools were stained on the surface with a brownish tinge from having lain embedded in the brown soil. They were manufactured in two stages: chipping and grinding. Celts made on slate were generally flat and required a minimum of chipping. In such cases, the stone celts were ground at the working end only, as a result of which the effect in fashioning the tool was minimal. Since the slate material naturally occurs as flat nodules, it must have attracted the attention of the Neolithic people for this reason. In the case of sandstone, chipping clearly preceded grinding. The tools obtained by chipping and grinding retained flake scars on the surfaces in spite of subsequent grinding all over. The stone tools can be classified into two types (Fig. 3; Plate II*a*): (a) shouldered celts; (b) round-butted.

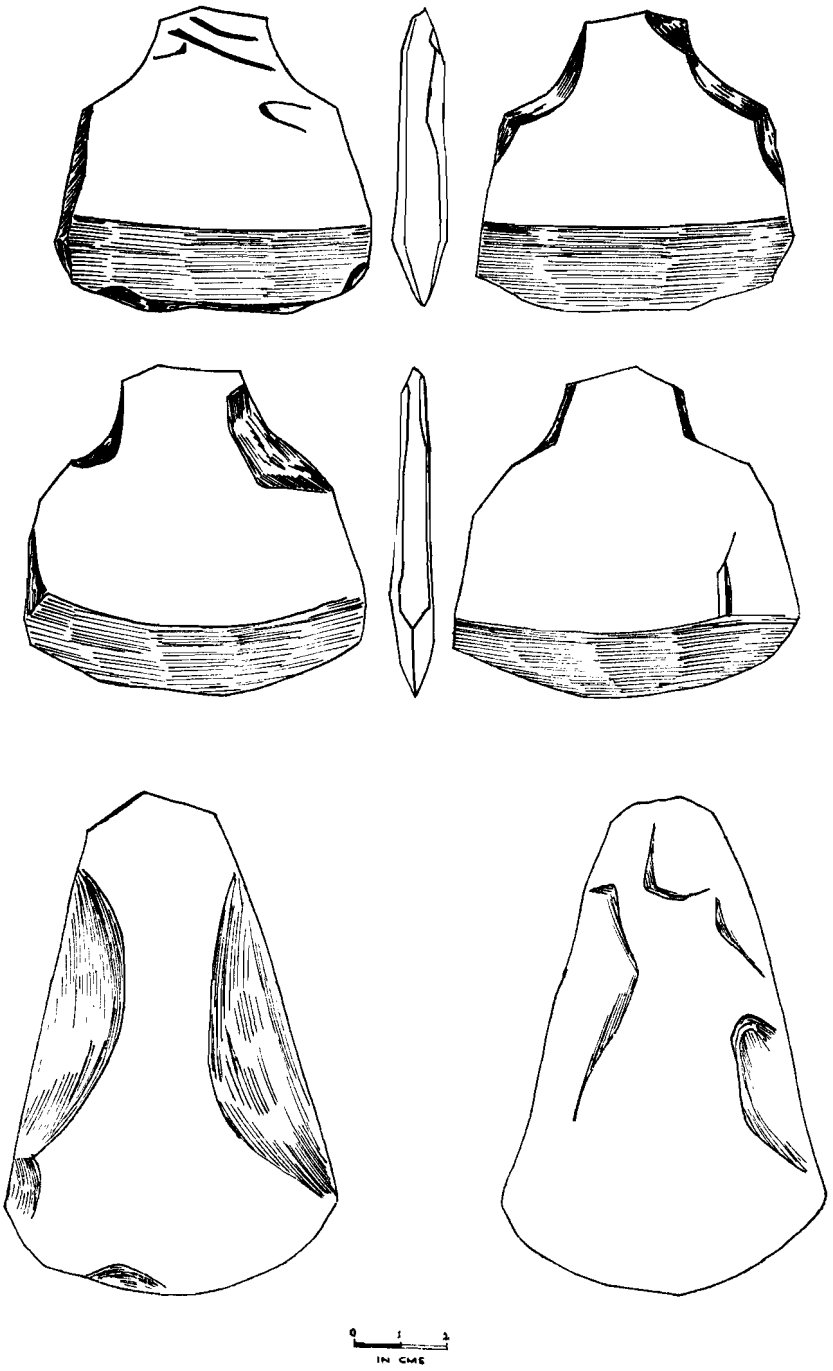

Fig. 3 Neolithic celts, Sarutaru.

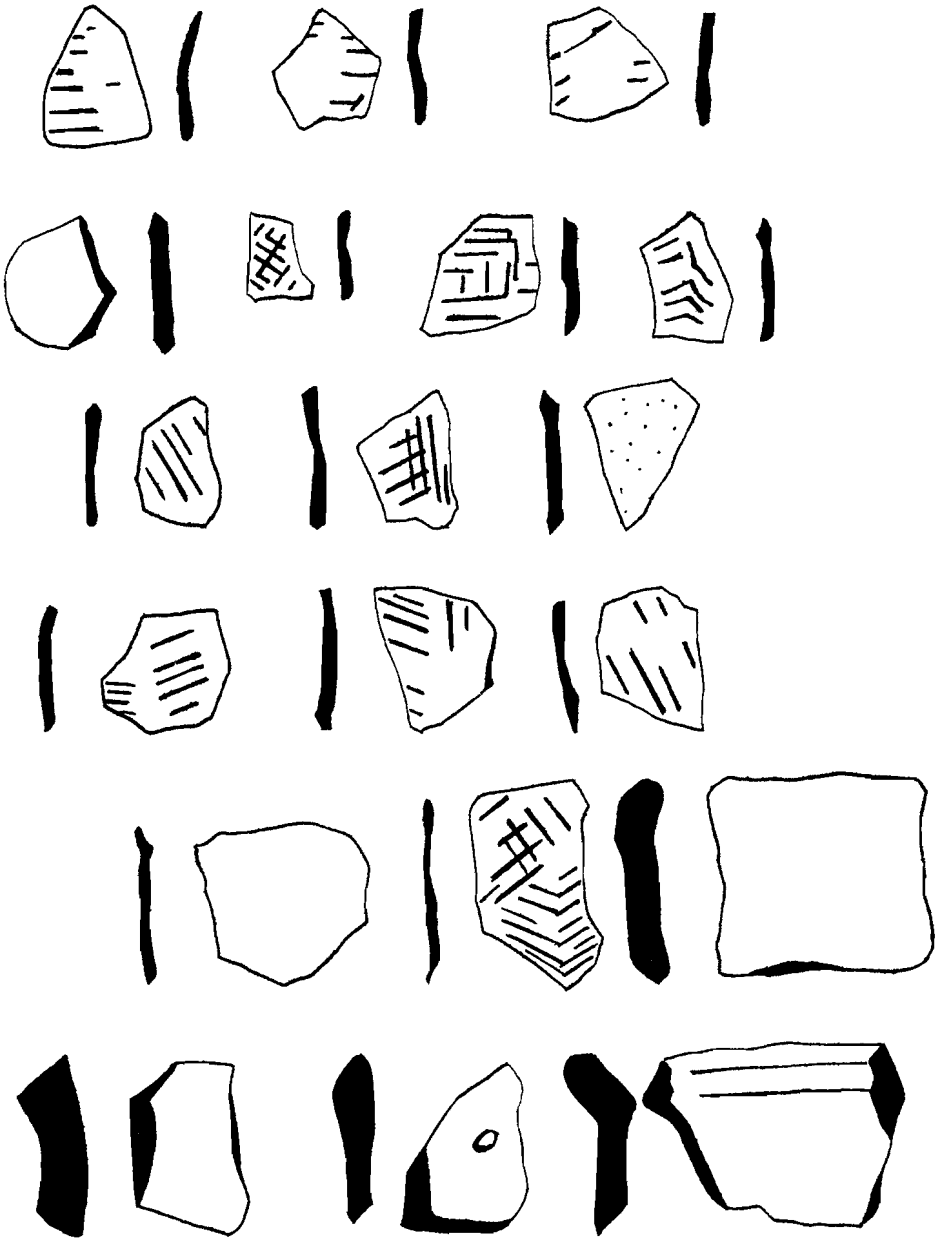

Fig. 4 Cord-impressed potsherds, Sarutaru.

The surfaces of the celts made on slate are smooth and the sections thin. The straight and broad cutting edge is sharp, due to bifacial grinding for about a centimeter from the working edge. The tenon at the butt end is formed by two curved shoulders on either side. The shoulders are obtained by making two grooves on either side, first by chipping and then by grinding, possibly with a harder rounded pebble. In one of the specimens, the shoulders are finished almost to a right angle. The edge of a shouldered celt is blunted by use, which produces indentation marks. The round-butted axe type has a median cutting edge which is sharp and broad. The sides taper gently to make the butt end rounded and the cross-section biconvex.

Numerous potsherds (Fig. 4) were recovered from the excavation along with the stone celts; no complete shape was present. Pottery was fashioned by hand, the clay mixed with quartz particles which show up on the surface. The coarse fabric with thicker walls was fired at a low temperature and so is not well baked. The potsherds can thus be classified into two groups on the basis of the surface color attained due to the varying firing each was subjected to: brown and grey. The brown ware predominates over the grey ware.

A characteristic feature of this pottery is the exterior decoration on most of the sherds. The decoration is in the form of impressed patterns such as (a) simple cord impressions, (b) twisted cord impressions, (c) herringbone patterns, and (d) zig-zag patterns. The most striking feature of decoration is the cord impression, which uses the following technique: In the process of making a vessel by hand, two parts of the vessel are molded by hand separately. These are joined together by beating with a wooden paddle while the clay is leather-hard. The paddle could be wrapped up in rows of cord, either plain or twisted, and their impressions laid on the vessel. The herringbone pattern is rendered by beating obliquely on the vessel. So also the zig-zag patterns result from paddling in irregular fashion. The cord impression cechnique is an unmistakable trait and a unique method of decoration in the Neolithic culture of this region and is not encountered in the rest of the Indian Neolithic tultures.

Marakdola: A Post-Neolithic Site

Marakdola is a village inhabited by another group of aborigines called the Mikirs. The site is situated on the periphery of the village over the gently sloping foothills overlooking the lowland with paddy fields (Plate II*b*). It occurs as a low mound and stretches over 10 m in length. A cluster of menhirs, numbering over 50 and erected without any apparent order, is found by the side of the site.

Excavation of a part of the mound by laying two trenches measuring 3 m square, each with a total depth of 1.7 m, has revealed a single culture deposit below the surface humus at a depth of 15 cm (Fig. 5). The second layer, 25 cm thick, is formed by black soil with potsherds. The third and main stratum is 60 cm thick, comprising loose black silt along with burnt clay pellets. From this stratum were recovered ceramic vessels with full shapes intact (Plate II*c*), including many potsherds (Plate III*a*). The bottom layer is the natural brown compact soil and archaeologically sterile. The cultural contents of the deposit at Marakdola can be analyzed as follows: (a) pottery, (b) a shouldered celt, and (c) terracotta objects. Except for these artifacts, no other evidence has been found from the excavation thus far.

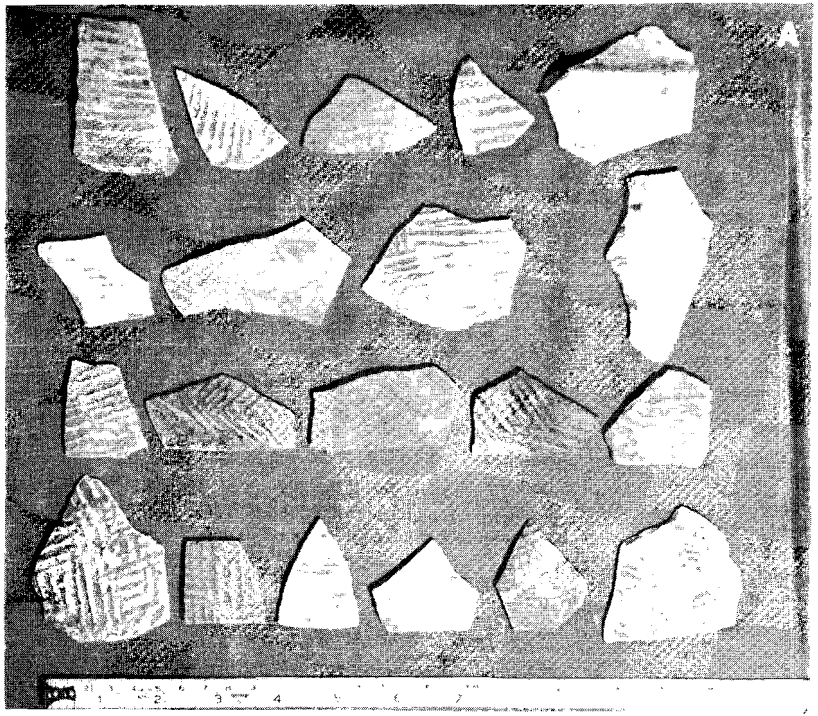

Plate III *a*, carved-paddle-impressed potsherds, Marakdola; *b*, decorated pottery, Marakdola; *c*, carinated and spouted vessels, Marakdola; *d*, vessels with carved paddle impressions at the base, Marakdola.

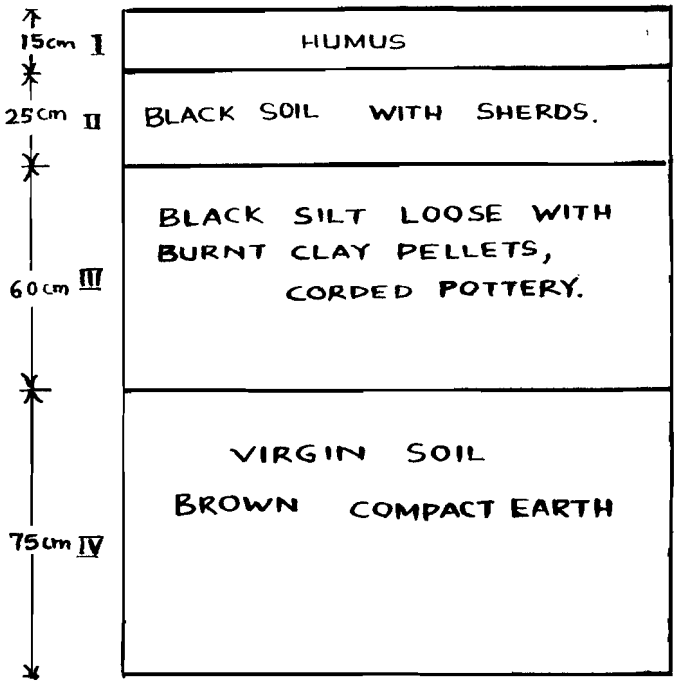

Fig. 5 Marakdola stratigraphic section.

The Marakdola pottery is remarkable for the relatively superior quality of its method of manufacture and the state of its preservation. The ceramic ware of Marakdola is made out of well-levigated kaolin clay with no impurities or grit. This clay is widely distributed and easily accessible in this area along the neighboring river Digaru. Generally, the texture of the fabric is fine and the walls of the ware thin. The entire range of pottery was turned on the wheel to obtain the definite shape of a vessel from shoulder up to rim, after which the bottom was beaten to full shape. It was fired usually at a high temperature, in a closed kiln. The ware shades off from cream to buff, red, and grey, with the first type predominating and no slip applied. The surfaces of the cream to buff ware are smooth; the grey ware is harder, evidently due to excessive firing, and gives a little metallic sound.

Some of the vessels show a wide variety of motifs or decorations on the exterior of the ware. These can be divided into (a) carved paddle-impressed, very similar in appearance to cord-marked, (b) medium net, (c) parallel bands, and (d) herring-bone. The most striking and recurring feature of decoration is the carved paddle impressions that invariably spread over the base and shoulder of the vessel as it is paddled after the neck portion is molded on the wheel. The parallel bands seem to have been impressed while the vessel was turned on the wheel.

A wide range of pottery shapes is made which can be classified into ten types (Plate III*b, c;* Fig. 6*a–e*):

a. Globular vessel: with or without carination at the shoulder; flaring mouth and short neck; exterior decoration at the base with cord impressions and parallel bands (Fig. 6*a*).

b. Goblet: flat base and sharp carination at the shoulder; wide flaring mouth and everted rim; plain.
c. Bowl (large): spherical base; wide open mouth; short neck; carination at the shoulder; plain (Fig. 6*b*).
d. Lid (large): central knob; same diameter as the bowl; plain (Fig. 6*b*).
e. Dish: flat base; plain.
f. Bowl (small, close-mouthed): flat base; high-walled parallel incised bands in the middle of exterior (Fig. 6*c*).
g. Lid (small): central knob.
h. Globular vessel (small): short neck, flaring rim with mouth; plain.
i. Spouted vessel (big): spherical base, short neck with everted rim, long spout joined to the vessel above shoulder (Fig. 6*d*).
j. Bowl: medium-sized incurved rim; flat base, plain.

Terracotta objects included a dish on a stand, smoking pipes, a terracotta cake, a fishing weight, and a zoomorphic form. The dish on a stand is broken into pieces, with the dish portion missing. It is elongated with a circular hole tapering from the base to the neck. The exterior is elaborately decorated with parallel bands and incised grooves all over the stand. It is hollow and round-based (Fig. 6*e*). The smoking pipe is elongated and has a circular section with a hole from top to bottom. It has thick walls and is decorated with parallel grooves. The terracotta cake is thin and triangular in outline; in section, it is a parallelogram resembling a Neolithic celt. The fishing weight is oval in outline, with straight ends and a hole in the middle along the longitudinal axis running from one end to the other. An abstract zoomorphic form is also found with limbs that suggest a dog or a deer.

All the objects unearthed at Marakdola are of clay, except a single specimen of shouldered celt of slate stone.

Significantly, no other evidence has been encountered in the course of excavation so far completed. It appears that the site is not a place of habitation, as no evidence relating to kitchen refuse could be traced. The relatively prolific occurrence of a wide variety of pottery in such a small area and the presence of burnt clay pellets occurring along with pottery suggest that the site was primarily the place of a potter's workshop. The availability of kaolin clay is another positive contributory factor to such a hypothesis. The advanced ceramic technology and the multiplicity of types of ware noted at Marakdola are indicative of the culturally complex society for which the ware was designed. Kaolin pottery has a wide distribution in the nuclear area of the Brahmaputra Valley, occurring at the sites of Ambari and in Nowgong and Tezpur Districts.

Preliminary excavation at Ambari (Ansari and Dhavalikar 1971), at a distance of 30 km NE of Marakdola, has yielded a ceramic ware with typical forms and decorations, closely resembling the pottery of Marakdola. Ambari Ware, as it is called, is assigned to Period I of Ambari. A time bracket of seventh to twelfth century A.D. has been ascribed to Stratum 3 on the basis of a C-14 date of 1030 ± 150 A.D. and on the basis of stylistic features of sculpture recovered from the same Period I. The excavators further observe that since the deposit of Period I with

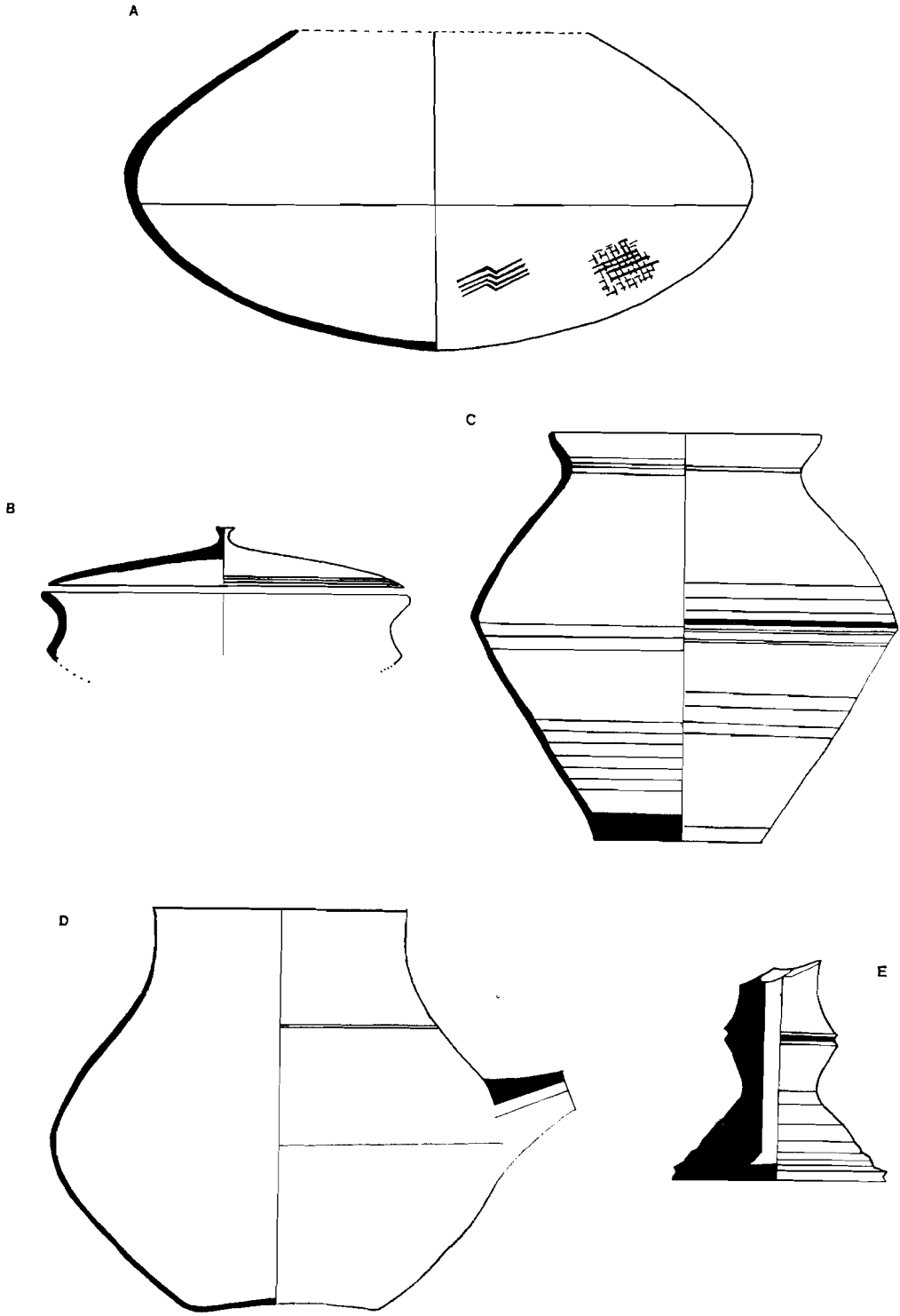

Fig. 6 *a*, Globular vessel with carved-paddle impressions; *b*, bowl with lid; *c*, carinated vessel; *d*, spouted vessel; *e*, broken stand.

similar cultural material continues deeper into the subsoil water structure for 3 m, the beginnings of this period can be stretched back to the early centuries of the Christian era. On the basis of this well-considered hypothesis of early antiquity, we can reasonably adopt the same time bracket for Marakdola. From the two sites of Sarutaru and Marakdola, carbon samples have been collected for C-14 determination. A C-14 determination has been received for one sample of charcoal recovered from Trench III and Layer 3 of the post-Neolithic site at Marakdola (Fig. 5). The radiocarbon dating was processed at the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany, Lucknow, India, B.S.I.P. No. B. 5–42; the date given is 658 ± 93 years B.P.; that is, 1292 A.D. with a half-life value of 5570 ± 30 years.

Thus, the date of 1292 A.D. obtained by radiocarbon dating broadly agrees with the upper limit of the time bracket (seventh to twelfth century A.D.) suggested by archaeological dating for the Marakdola site.

It must be pointed out, however, that the date should not be construed as applicable to the whole study region, in view of the fact that the ceramic tradition found at Marakdola had differential distribution in time and in Northeastern India.

Parallels

The Neolithic culture of Northeastern India is distinguished by the predominance of shouldered tools and the characteristic cord-marked pottery. Within the subcontinent, the Neolithic culture of Northeastern India has no strict parallel. The shouldered tool type has a sporadic distribution in the adjacent states of Eastern India but without the typical pottery tradition. Yet there appears to be no doubt about the relationship between Northeastern India and the countries of Southeast Asia as far as Neolithic prehistory is concerned. On the basis of legends and folklore, the Khasis, a linguistic group, had entered this region from Burma through the Patkoi range (Gurdon 1975) during the prehistoric period. This westward movement of people seems to have started in Neolithic times, in contrast to the "widespread diffusion of ideas and techniques; or perhaps, the actual movement of people eastwards out of India in the late Stone Age period" (Glover 1973).

Without reference to chronology, the Neolithic culture of Sarutaru and the post-Neolithic culture of Marakdola, relating to their essential elements of shouldered celt and cord-marked pottery, can be compared with the similar cultures of Southeast Asia, such as the Non-Nok Tha of Thailand (Higham 1972), the Lungshanoid of China (Clark 1969), the Sham Wan of Hong Kong (Joukowsky 1973), and other cultures of the Philippines (Solheim 1970), Taiwan (Chang 1970), and Burma (Movius 1943).

The megalithic monuments of Northeastern India in general and Marakdola in particular do not show any relationship—in cultural context, structural features, and ideas underlying their erection—with those of other regions of the subcontinent. The structures of this region mainly comprise free-standing monoliths and cromlechs, whereas the megalithic structures of other parts of the Indian subcontinent are basically different. The megalithic builders of peninsular India buried their dead along with their belongings, including iron implements and the typical black and red ware(Wheeler 1960). Haimendorf (1945) rightly observes that the megalithic structures of this region, in type and concept, belong essentially to Southeast Asia.

DISCUSSION

Meggers (1954) observes that "the level to which a culture can develop is dependent upon the agricultural potentiality of the environment it occupies." This is fully borne out in the case of Northeastern India, where the environment exerts a profound influence on cultural development, resulting in the continuity and survival of cultures from the prehistoric past down to the present. Invoking the geographical concepts of areas of attraction, areas of isolation or *culs de sac,* and areas of relative isolation, an attempt has been made in the foregoing analysis to demonstrate the effect of environment on the cultural evolution of the region.

The nuclear area of Brahmaputra Valley with its fertile alluvial plains has fostered in its lap a civilization characterized by relative complexity. The *culs de sac* or areas of isolation show a harmonious adjustment of physical and cultural environment, enabling the hill folk to subsist on *jhuming* or shifting cultivation supplemented by hunting and fishing. The hill people living in the areas of relative isolation are to some extent acculturated owing to their proximity to the Brahmaputra Valley.

It is in the areas of isolation that we can trace this cultural continuity and survival. An analysis of the ethnographic present reveals that at least two linguistic groups inhabit this region: the Mon-Khmer and the Tibeto-Burman. These groups are further subdivided into a number of dialects. In spite of variations in their speech, all the groups enjoy a common level of cultural development inasmuch as they share a similar physical environment. The ethnographic present of the Khasis has been treated in detail to serve as a model for the rest of the region in economy, technology, customs, and beliefs. The Khasis practice *jhuming* on the hilly terrain by making use of metal hoes. The traction plough so common in the Brahmaputra Valley cannot be used here except in small pockets of lowland. *Jhuming* entails greater inputs in the form of man-hours for clearing the vegetation every time the farmers shift from one place to another for cultivation; this practice results in low productivity. In the field of technology there is a change in the choice of material for making the tools; implements made of iron instead of stone are generally employed for *jhuming*. But the shape of the metal tool strongly recalls the Neolithic shouldered hoe.

The pottery technique exhibits the survival of one of the oldest traditions of hand fashioning without decoration or painting. The fast-moving wheel so common in the nuclear area is unknown to the Khasis. Among other old customs and beliefs that have persisted is the manner of disposal of the dead. After cremating the dead, they deposit the ashes and uncalcined bones in a stone chamber and erect a memorial stone.

The excavation at the Neolithic site of Sarutaru situated in the area bordering the Khasi Hills and Kamarup District throws significant light on the Neolithic culture of this region. In the past, polished stone celts were collected without reference to their cultural context. The single culture stratum at Sarutaru revealed not only ground stone shouldered celts but also pottery. The pottery was made by hand and its exterior decorated with cord impressions. The physical environment in which Neolithic man lived appears to be the same as the one experienced by the

present-day hill people; there is little appreciable difference in cultural development from the Neolithic period down to the present in the same region.

Marakdola, a post-Neolithic site situated not far from Sarutaru, yielded wheel-turned kaolin pottery that is also distinguished by carved paddle-impression, a form of decoration strikingly similar to that of Neolithic pottery. But this pottery has a wider distribution in the Brahmaputra Valley. On the basis of the evidence, we infer that the site was a potters' workshop. From the wide variety of pottery types coupled with advanced ceramic technology, it can be surmised that the potters' center of Marakdola catered mainly to the needs of societies in the nuclear area and appears to have had no impact on the hill people.

The Neolithic stone industry and the typical ceramic technology characterized by cord-marked or carved paddle pottery of Northeastern India have no close parallels in the rest of the country. But their close similarity with Southeast Asian cultures of the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods is convincingly demonstrated by a comparative study. The validity of this hypothesis is further reinforced by the comparative ethnolinguistic study with reference to the Khasis, who belong to a Mongoloid stock and the Mon-Khmer linguistic group. They seemed to have entered India from Burma through the Potkoi hill range, where a branch of a similar linguistic group still exists.

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