



A NOTE ON AN INSCRIBED DABBER FROM KURAIN (KANPUR)

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Kuriyan or Kurain is a village in Ghatampur Tehsil of Kanpur District. It has yielded fine grey ware, black and red ware, black slipped ware, black and red polished pottery, NBPW and red ware of the later periods. The antiquities include terracotta figures of Sunga, Kusana and Gupta periods among other objects. In this context, the discovery of an inscribed terracotta dabber bearing Kusana Brahmi characters is quite remarkable and worth studying (Fig.1).



The details of the terracotta dabber are as follows:

Height - 10cm

Weight - 500gm

Shape - Tapering side with rounded upper and lower parts

Designs- No designs or incision marks except an inscription on the
body part near its shoulders. The inscription
consists of 5 letters of the Kusana Brahmi script that
can be read as 'Rayo Brasasa', i.e. the King 'Brasasa' or

'Vasa' as often seen that the letter 'ba' is used for 'Va' in Prakrit language script.

Colour- Yellowish with red slip and blackish core.

Keeping in view the size and shape of the Brahmi characters inscribed on it, one is tempted to compare it with other inscriptions of the period such as the Lalabhagata Pillar Inscription and the Musa Nagar inscription in the same region.

It would not be out of place to mention an important site excavated in Sadar Tehsil of Lucknow District. The site is called Kalli Pachchhim and was excavated by the Department of Ancient History, Culture and Archaeology in 1999. (Tewari: 123: XXXI-I). This site has yielded 5 terracotta dabbers (Fig.2). One of these dabber5 resembles very well with the inscribed terracotta dabber of our study in shape and colour. However, it is shorter in size and bears no inscription or design. What is quite interesting is its chronological position as it comes from the pd II of that site belonging to Sunga-Kusana period. Thus, both the dabbers - one from the Gomati Valley and the other from the Yamuna Valley - are chronologically and typologically akin to each other. This also suggests a kind of cultural unity between the two sites.

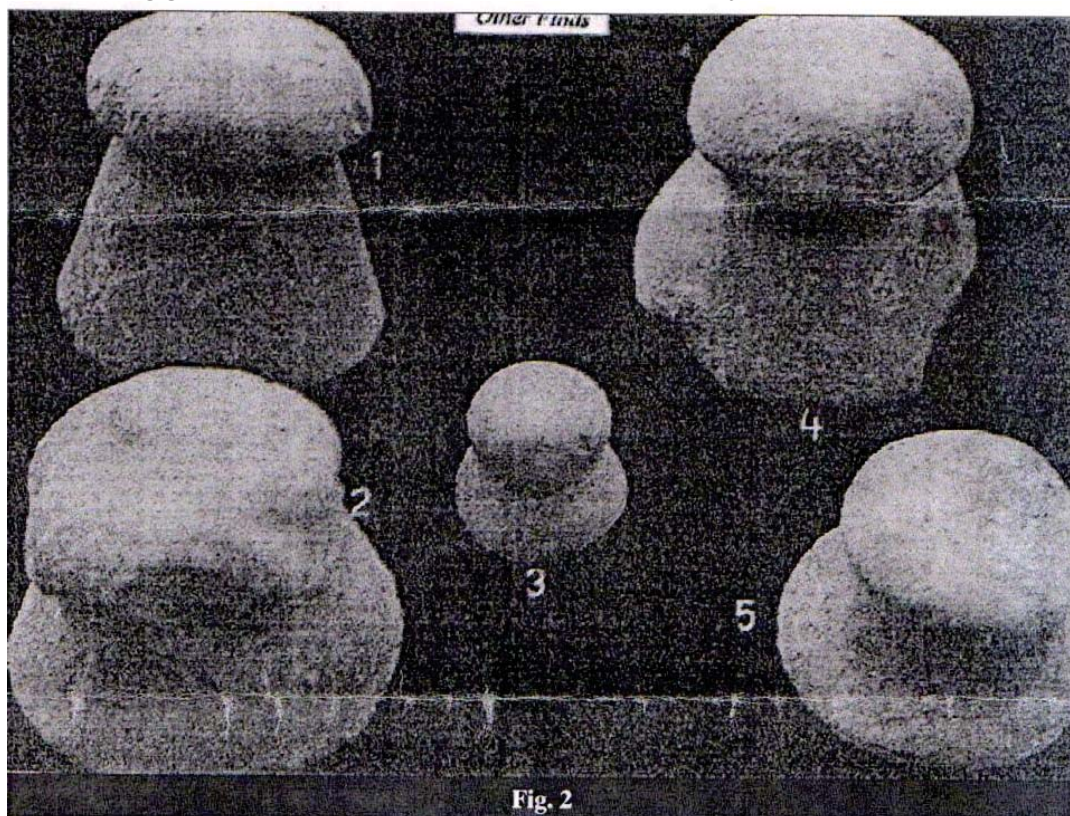


Fig. 2

If we delve deep into the antiquity and the social necessity of the earthen pots and pans, the utility of this potter's tool is self - evident. It is an essential tool for giving proper shape and sturdiness to the larger pots and vessels and has been compared in ancient literature with the '*guru*' (the teacher), who beats the children but supports them and caresses them with a very kind and loving hand and heart. Archaeologically speaking, it has its origin in the Harappan period, which has yielded very fine painted and decorated pottery that needed a dabber to give it proper shape and solidity. Thus, it is quite evident that the terracotta dabbers have a very hoary antiquity and social and economic utility as a tool of the potter to produce shapely and sturdy pottery.

Identification of the Kind and his state:

As stated above, the name of the king, with '*rayo*' as his honorific title, suggests a country or state lying in the vicinity of the Yamuna river, where the site is situated. According to the Mahabharata (1.12.20) Usinaras and Vasas (Barasas?) were the natives of the coterminus states. In the Mahabharata, Bhismaparva (9.61), the term '*vasa*' has been used to identify a country or state, which yielded enough food grains to provide full diet to its people. The Kausitaki Upanisad also speaks of Vasa and Usinaras as k '*Samvasan*' i.e. living together. The kingdom of the famous Usinara King '*Sibi*' or '*Sivi*' extended upto the Yamuna river. The '*Vasa*' King was his immediate neighbour. So the border of both the states was probably marked by the river Yamuna. Probably, these states continued upto the historical periods.

Thus, it is very clear that the King '*Vasa*' or '*Brasa*' lived somewhere in the agriculturally rich Yamuna valley. It might have been the modern Kurain or Kuriyan whose name itself suggests some kind of affinity with the Kuru-Panchalas. If our identification stands valid this particular terracotta object would help bring archaeology and tradition together which is the need of the time. Both need to be studied in their proper perspective.

References:

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