

## A RARE DOG HEADED HOOKED SWORD OF THE COPPER HOARD CULTURE

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The Indian Copper Hoards, especially those of the Middle Ganga valley, are often unique of their kind as regards to their artistic shape, design, ornamentation and figuration. These Copper Hoards have a variety of artifacts such as anthropomorphs, harpoons, hooked swords, antennae swords, celts-both flat and shouldered rings, lugged, spearheads, chisels and Khurpis (used for agricultural purposes) etc. It is interesting to note that the mid-Gangetic Copper Hoards are tastefully decorated with linear strokes religious symbols, human face with horns animal figures like bull, aquatic animals like fish, astronomical figures and heavenly bodies like stars, pitmarks like a string or a semi circle, etc.

The small copper sword in question is quite unique of its kind as its right side hook is shaped like the head of a dog, while the left side hook is broken, but must have been quite similar in shape. It has a very prominent mid-rib quite strong and sturdy on both the sides: and thus appears to have a lozenge shape when looked from both the sides. The tip of its blade is broken. So it is not clear if its end part was pointed or semicircular as seen in a hooked sword from Saharanpur (ace. No. 87.22/2). Two such swords were found at Sarthauli, Etawah<sup>2</sup> but these swords do not have any kind of animal figure ornamentation like the present specimen, with a rectangular tang which is semi circular as the end

The other distinguishing features of this copper hooked sword

(or lugged spearhead so called due to its small size) are as follows:

Site: Roshanamau (Mandoli), District Kanpur Near Rind River.

Weight - 300 g

Length - about 20 cm

Unique Feature - Very sturdy mid-rib and the figure of a dog forming its right hook or lug.

**Technique:** Mould-casting technique was used; and the hook appears to have been intended for fastening with a shaft when used as a spearhead. The skillful and realistic representation of a small dog head at the hilt is really very interesting as its protruded eyes, thin mouth and raised ears show high standard of craftsmanship in preparing terracotta mould for its casting.

**Discussion:** As stated, animal figures such as bull and stage have been found carved on the copper hoard artifacts of the mid Gangetic region, but the solid figurehead of a dog is a rarity in their assemblage.

In the prehistoric times and the Neolithic period dog is found to be the most faithful companion of the hunter gatherer in the wilderness and homestead both. Therefore, the representation of its head at the hilt as an accessory part of his safety weapon like sword or lancehead is but natural. This emotional attachment and affection for the safeguarding pet animal is also represented in the earnings found at Burzahom Neolithic stone stele in Kashmir. There was also a custom of burying pet dog beside the dead body of its master.<sup>3</sup> It appears that this idea must have been borrowed

from the Mahabharata legend of Yudhisthira's journey to heaven with his pet dog. It is aptly said that "traditions die hard" and here we find the reflection of the same age-old tradition. For a hunter of warrior there could be no better companion than a dog for showing him the path and his desired object or prey.<sup>4</sup> The sword was another asset for protection in his plight and platitude.

Man is a social animal. He has a mind full of imagination and observation. Art is said to be the creation of his play of fancy and emotional expression. Here we see the best example of it. In the terracotta art of Kannauj, a dog is found engraved on a round tablet of the proto historic period.<sup>5</sup> Even in the rock-paintings as well the dog is represented in the hunting scene. In a rhinoceros hunting scene of Mirzapur rock-paintings a group of hunters is seen with lugged spears with long sticks or shafts.

Thus we may conclude that Copper Hoard Culture appears to be pre-Harappan in all its forms and environmental settings.

Again these swords are quite different from Harappan swords in shape and metallic contents.

In short the Copper Hoard culture of the Ganga Valley appears to be anterior to the Harappan culture on the basis of circumstantial and archaeological evidences.

#### Notes and References:

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3. Fonia, R.S. and Sangita Chakraborty. 2006-2007. The Farming Communities of the Northern India: A Fresh Approach, Puratattva No. 37: 169; PL.V
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