



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor: 5.2
IJAR 2017; 3(7): 414-417
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 01-06-2017
Accepted: 05-07-2017

V Ranjith Kumar
Lecturer in History,
Govt Degree College,
Yerragondapalem Prakasam,
Andhra Pradesh, India

Dr. K Ravi sankar
Research Scholar, Department
of History, University of
Hyderabad, Telangana, India

Salvage archaeology: A case study of Nagarjunakonda

V Ranjith Kumar and Dr. K Ravi sankar

Abstract

Salvaging, often involves the transplantation of the ancient monuments to safer areas. Salvaging of the world famous Nubian monuments in the Aswan Dam Project in Nile valley in Egypt and the transplantation of a variety of Buddhist stupas, Chaityas & other monuments cultural importance in the ancient city of Vijayapurion the banks of the river Krishna during the construction of Nagarjunasagar Dam in Andhra Pradesh belongs to this category.

Keywords: Salvage archaeology, artifacts under water, transplantation, excavational activities

Introduction

Archaeology is the scientific study of Human past through the material remains of ancient human occupations. It embraces the whole range of ancient culture. Architecture, epigraphy, sculpture, paintings, ceramics, industrial waste, monuments, and tools would be studied to understand and reconstruct the history of human. Thus it is an empirical discipline concerned with the recovery, systematic description and study of old artifacts in scientific methods. It helps us look back into the past and see where we came from-and how we have made our way from the Stone Age to the space age. Archaeology deals with artifacts and materials in physical form. There are different branches of archaeology to understand various categories of materials. Each branch of Archaeology has its own specific purpose and significance. Salvage archaeology is recovering and study the objects and cultures which under destruction. In other words we can say it is archaeological study on demand.

Salvage archaeology

Salvage archaeology is a very recent methodology and is also called 'Rescue' archaeology, 'Commercial' archaeology, 'Preventive' archaeology, 'Contract' archaeology, or 'Compliance' archaeology. The most common colloquial terms are 'rescue' or 'crisis' archaeology. Coming to the specific usage of the terms, in the United Kingdom, the term 'rescue' or 'crisis' archaeology is used more often and in Australia the term 'salvage' or 'preventive' is more commonly used. All the names, in one way or the other, express the urgency associated with the excavation work.

The terms 'salvage' and 'emergency' excavation were first used in the 1950s and 1960s when post-war development was proceeding rapidly. It is a survey and excavation carried out in advance of construction or other developmental activities like, Highway projects, major construction, proposed dams, etc. This kind of archaeology attained importance all over the world in the wake of many developmental programmes and constructional activities. Unlike other kinds of archaeology, the nature of this type of excavation underpins its urgency to be carried out. For example, if an archaeologist is interrupted by the news of the discovery of vital remains during ongoing construction or development activity, the very minute he should take preventive measures to control the damage caused to the artifacts, by salvaging them.

In such contexts, archaeologists have to work under pressure of time and therefore, sites taken up have to be selective with greater emphasis on clearance and recovery of antiquities without prejudice to the scientific methods. This is indeed a difficult task and the results may not be cent percent technically sound; but it is the best that could be done in the circumstances. In recent years, archaeologists have developed more scientific methods and techniques of survey in excavation work in salvage operations.

Correspondence
V Ranjith Kumar
Lecturer in History,
Govt Degree College,
Yerragondapalem Prakasam
Dt., Andhra Pradesh, India

Significance of Salvaging

Salvage archaeology helps in protecting, preserving and promoting the cultural heritage. The heritage of mankind constitute the legacy of tangible(physical artifacts) and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations. Tangible heritage includes buildings and historic places, monuments, artifacts, etc. They are unique and non-renewable and are considered worthy of preservation for the future. The 2003 UNESCO Convention underlines different approaches for preservation and safeguarding of the Cultural Heritage.

Salvaging, often involves the transplantation of the ancient monuments to safer areas. Salvaging of the world famous Nubian monuments in the Aswan Dam Project in Nile valley in Egypt and the transplantation of a variety of Buddhist stupas, Chaityas and other monuments cultural importance in the ancient city of Vijayapuri on the banks of the river Krishna during the construction of Nagarjunasagar Dam in Andhra Pradesh belongs to this category.

Nagarjunasagar Dam

To serve the domestic as well as irrigational purposes of the people of the erstwhile Hyderabad state and the Madras state, the then Government of India gave a green signal for the construction of major irrigational project at Nagarjuna Sagar, across the river Krishna in Nandikonda Hills. This is the largest and highest masonry dam in the world. Nagarjuna Sagar took its name after the Buddhist Scholar and Savant, Nagarjuna, a great scholar of ancient culture who lived in the vicinity of this area during early Christian centuries. In February 1955, the planning commission agreed for taking up Nandikonda Project at an estimated cost of 75.08 crores, as per the recommendations of the Khosla committee. In June 1955 Government of India constituted Nagarjunasagar Control Board consisting of representatives of Government of India, Government of Andhra and Hyderabad Government. Foundation stone was laid by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India on 10-12-1955.



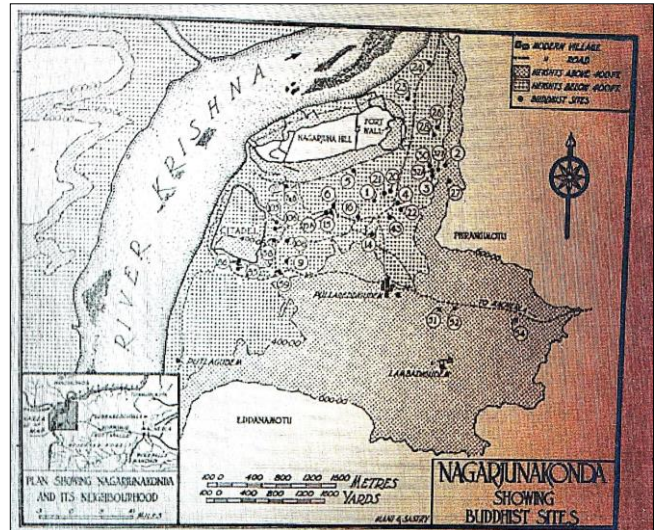
Source: Nagarjuna Konda Museum

Fig 1: Foundation stone by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

Beginning of settlements in the area

Archaeological evidences suggest that from 2000 B.C. onwards, most of the proto historic inhabitants were seen along the banks of rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra in Andhra [1]. Later there was a gradual technological advancement in the construction, metallurgy and agriculture and that in turn gave rise to the process of urbanization. All

these developments occurred simultaneously with the introduction of Buddhism in the region. The *Milindapanha*, a contemporary Buddhist text provides information with regard to the planning of building towns and cities [2]. Excavation revealed the existence of the multi-storeyed structures with tiled roofs in the Krishna basin in Andhra [3]. Nagarjunakonda is at present almost an isolated area but before 2500 years ago it was a busiest town.



(Source: H Sarkar)

Fig 2: Nagarjunakonda showing Buddhist sites

The influence of megalithic structures on the Buddhist stupas at Nagarjunakonda and Peddaganjam [4] and the inscriptions at Amaravati [5] and Bhattiprolu [6] referring to the gifts made by the political chieftains of those times to the Buddhist *sangha*, endorse the interconnectedness between urbanization and Buddhism in the Krishna river valley. One of the urban centres in the Krishna valley was the ancient town of Vijayapuri, the capital of the Ikshvaku rulers. It was a thriving centre of Buddhism where the famous monk Nagarjuna lived and taught. It was rich with cultural treasures like monasteries, shrines, amphitheatres, viharas and a world famous university with monks coming from as far as China and Sri Lanka [7].

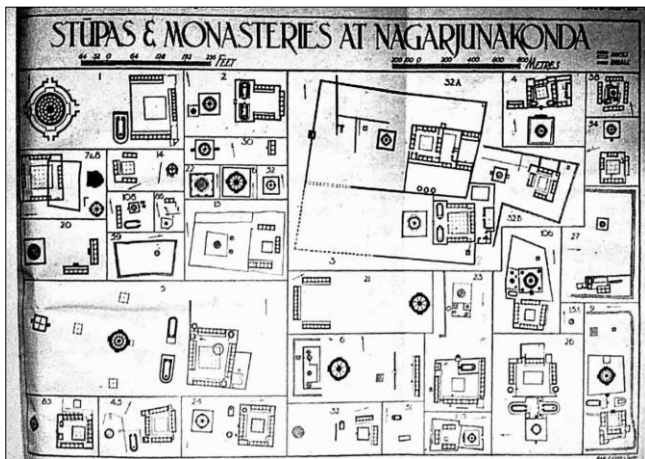
The archaeologists of Britain and India worked very effectively to recover the artifacts which deal the history of Nagarjunakonda between 300 B C to 300 A D. The commercial towns like Goli, Chezerla, Amaravathi, Jaggayyapeta, Ghantasala, Gummiduru, Bezawada, and Bhattiprolu were enhanced international fame by Buddhist sites flourished at Nagarjunakonda and many other places. Nagarjunakonda became very much important during Ikshvaku rulers. Nagarjunakonda is the capital city of Ikshvakus. Nagarjunakonda was strong center because of backing of Ikshvaku queens. Most of the queens and princes were gave more assistance to Nagarjunakonda to make it as another Nalanda or Vikramasila.

Many inscriptions at Nagarjunakonda refers the names of many kings and queens who belongs to Ikshvaku dynasty. Famous royal lady named *Chamatisiri* was praised in a passage on the pillars for her immense support to construct Buddhist monuments. The greatest stupa was rebuilt by Chamtisiri in the sixth year of the reign of king Siri Virapurasadatta [8]. Other royal princes names found in the inscriptions of Nagarjunakonda are *Adavi Chamtsiri*, *Bodhisiri*, *Chula Chamtsri*, *Mahadevi Bhatidevi* etc. [9].

Upasika Bodhisiri was great admirer of the missionary zeal of the Singhala (Ceylon) monks. Mahachaitya of Nagarjunakonda had many inscriptions which were deciphered by Prof. Vogel described about the great support given by Chamtisiri for the construction of various monuments in Nagarjunakonda.

Later many archaeological excavations and explorations in this area yielded more archaeological materials. The Chaityas, Stupas, Viharas, and other monuments of various religious communities were identified at Nagarjunakonda. Astabhujaswamy temple, Hariti temple and other Buddhist monuments clearly speaks about a multicultural nature of site Nagarjunakonda.

unknown till 1926, was brought to limelight due to the efforts of a local school teacher Suraparaju Venkataramaih. After hearing to the local shepherds about the presence of big dilapidated structures in the nearby forest, he personally visited the place and found some ancient brick and rock structures. Then he reported the same to the Madras presidency administration. Subsequently, the place was visited by A.R. Saraswati, Telugu assistant to the archaeological Superintendent for Epigraphy of Madras, Archaeological survey of India, and identified it as a potential archaeological site. The history of Nagarjunakonda was dated back to Stone Age cultures and continued up to medieval period.



(Source: H Sarkar)^[10]

Fig 3: Stupas and Monasteries at Nagarjunakonda

Mahachaitya of Nagarjunakonda was excavated by Longhurst which was 106 feet in diameter at the base and in its original state might have been 80 feet high. Nagarjunakonda had *Ayaka* at four cardinal points. Each *Ayaka* are five slender pillars and each of the five pillars represents the five chief incidents of the Buddha's life. On these *Ayaka* pillars one of the pillars had inscription where the name of Ikshvaku princes was engraved^[11].

Initial archaeological excavations and Salvaging

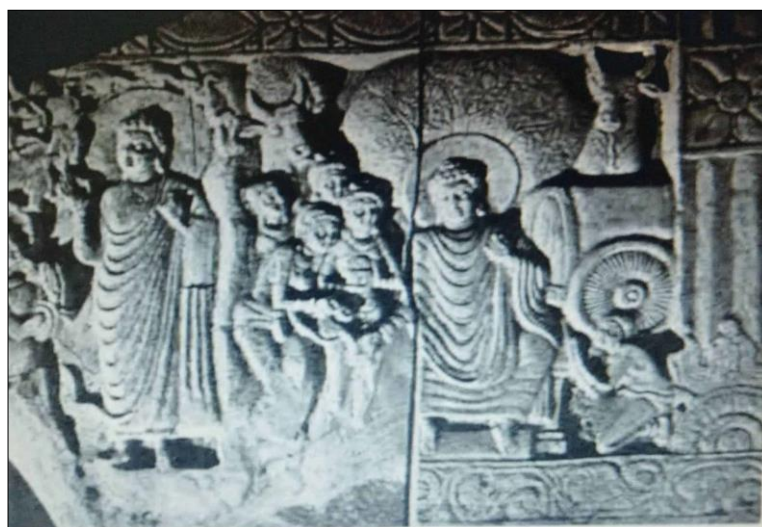
The rich archaeological wealth of the valley, which was



(Source: A H Longhurst)

Fig 4: Prince Siddhartha in pleasure garden

In the following year in 1927, the discovery was brought on the scene for the first time by M H Kuraishi and Longhurst, superintendent, Archaeological survey of India, southern circle. Longhurst excavated the site from 1927 to 1931. As a result of the excavation, a number of Buddhist monasteries and other monuments, besides numerous limestone sculptures were found. Again in 1938, a minor operation was carried out by T. N. Ramachandran, mostly in the same area where Longhurst excavated. The Sculptures recovered in excavations were kept in a small museum in the valley^[12].



(Source: A H Longhurst)

Fig 5: Offering food to Buddha after enlightenment

When the plan to transform the valley into a reservoir was decided, the Archaeological survey of India made a determined effort to protect cultural heritage by salvage the ruins before the submergence. In 1954, for the first time in India a large scale evacuation was planned in the Nagarjunakonda valley with the aim to rescue the cultural wealth before its submergence due to the proposed dam on the river Krishna in Nandi Hills. A special project for extensive excavation was formed in Aug 1954 to cope up with urgency. The project under R. Subramanyam, a superintendent, Archaeological survey of India was more successful in conducting excavations for some years. He excavated the entire valley with in short period of six years from 1954 to 1960 exposing more than 100 sites ranging from early stone age to the late medieval period. To salvage the important monuments, the famous Nagarjunakonda Island is chosen for the bodily transplantation of the tangible cultural heritage representing Hinduism and Buddhism^[13].

Conclusion

The proposed irrigation project gave no scope to avert the archaeological tragedy. It instead gave a birth to a new approach to combat the total destruction of the cultural heritage by the transplantation of the ruins. Today's Nagarjunakonda is the outcome of these salvaged monuments, exactly like that of the salvaging monuments of Nubia, threatened due to the construction of the Aswan Dam in Egypt. Altogether it can be said that Nagarjunakonda was a great city once and enjoyed great status as commercially and also religiously. The image worship and other shrines popularized more support to Buddhism. The monastic worship and educational vihara are other attractions for the monks from various countries also.

Hence, salvage archaeological operations are very much necessary for the protection and preservation of our ancestral wealth. It is also duty of every individual in India to protect the archaeological monuments and heritage sites. Preservation in the form of various records like videos, drawings, and photographs is necessary to provide the data to our future generations. Digitalization of documents and reports of archaeological sites is great treasure for future researches.

References

1. Ramachandra P. Murthy, *Megalithic Culture of the Godavari Basin*, Delhi: Sharada Publishing House; c2000. p. 32–35, 58, and 113.
2. Horner IB. (tr.), *Milinda's Questions*, Vol. I, London: Luzac & Company; c1969, p. 46.
3. Siva Nagi Reddy E. *Evolution of Building Technology*, Delhi: Bharatiya Lala Prakashan. 1998;1:120.
4. Sarkar H, Misra BN. *Nagarjunakonda*, New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India; c1987. p. 36.
5. Luders H. 'A List of Brahmi Inscriptions from the Earliest Times to about 400', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. X, No. 1266, 1909–10, p. 150.
6. Buhler A. 'Bhattiprolu Inscriptions', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. II, (1894), No. 6, p. 328 and in No. 9, p. 329. (These two inscriptions record donations given by a ruler called Kubiraka to the Buddhist stupa.)
7. Subrahmanyam R. *Nagarjunakonda (1954-60)*, *Memoirs of the Archeological survey of India*, no. 75, New Delhi. 1975;1:44
8. Loghurst AH. *The buddhist antiquities of Nagarjunakonda*, Madras Presidency, Archeological survey of India, no. 54; c1938. p. 4.
9. Ramachandran TN. *Memories of the Archaeological Survey of India*, Issue No.71; c1938. p. 23.
10. Sarkar H. *Some Aspects of Buddhist Monuments at Nagarjunakonda*, *Ancient India*, No.16, p. 65-85.
11. J Vijaytunga, *Nagarjunakonda*, Publication Division, Ministry of IB;c 1956. p. 13.
12. Loghurst AH. *The buddhist antiquities of Nagarjunakonda*, Madras Presidency, Archeological survey of India, no. 54; c1938. p. 4.
13. Ghosh NC. *Excavation at Satanikota 1977-80*, *Archeological survey of India*, New Delhi; c1986. p. 1.