ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I consider it my pleasant duty to express my gratitude to a host of people, without whose support and confidence in me this work could not have been completed, though mere words of gratitude will never suffice.

First and foremost, my gratitude to Professor K, Krishnan, my guide and mentor, the beacon of knowledge and guidance, fountain of inspiration and pillar of strength through the course of the present research work. It was only because of him and his faith in me that even though being a humanities student; I could venture into scientific studies. He always had an answer to all my enquiries regarding chemistry, and always encouraged me to read books on inorganic chemistry.

It my pleasure to express my sincere gratitude to my 'Guru' Dr Ismail Kellellu, former Reader in the Department of Ancient Indian History Culture And Archaeology, Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj (R.T.M.) Nagpur University, without whom I probably would have never known about the existence of Megalithic Culture. As a young student beginning the journey of learning in a new field of study, I could not have asked for better guidance. At each and every step of my early days in the department as a post graduate student, I encountered various questions and doubts which were ungrudgingly clarified by him. I was always benefited by his useful comments, suggestions and discussions. It was because of him that I decided to venture into the field of Megalithic studies. He tirelessly read through my drafts, made multiple suggestions and also reminded me at every juncture that archaeometallurgy was not a difficult field, and I could learn all the techniques by putting in that extra effort.

I am extremely grateful to Dr P. K Mitra and Dr Rajib Dey of the Department of Metallurgy and Material Sciences, Jadavpur University, Kolkata for willingly familiarizing me with the fundamentals of metallurgical studies. Metallurgy has become comprehensible now for me due to their untiring efforts. If I can now handle optical microscopes and can interpret microstructures with some degree of confidence, it is solely due to them.

Dr Saikat Samanta of the Department of Metallurgical and Material Engineering made learning inorganic chemistry easy and enjoyable. He taught me how to interpret data on chemical composition. Thanks are also due to Bitan and Chanchal who helped in grasping all the basic procedure like preparing samples for Wet Chemical Analysis and also taught me how to perform the experiments. I am highly grateful to Mr Bigneshwar Behera, Laboratory Assistant in the Metallurgy Department for his help in preparing the iron samples, and also during Optical Microscopy, Scanning Electron Microscopy and EDAX of the specimens.

I am deeply indebted to Prof. Subroto Chatterjee and Late Dr Nikhilesh Banerjee of Department of Metallurgy and Materials Engineering, Bengal Engineering and Science University Shibpur, Howrah (presently IIEST Shibpur) for allowing me to utilize the laboratories and other facilities (SEM and EDAX) at the department. But for Mr Moloy Kundu, it would have never been possible for me to learn that gold coating was more suitable than carbon coating for SEM and EDAX samples. He patiently guided me in the SEM laboratory and answered all my queries. Late Prof R. P Das willingly helped me in interpreting all the microstructures.

Dr Shashikant Acharya of the Department of Bio- Chemistry at the M.S.University of Baroda patiently taught me the nuances of doing mole value calculation and also helped me in interpreting my chemical composition data. Without him I would still be struggling in interpreting the presence of certain trace elements. Dr Rajan Barrett of the Department of English willingly read through and edited my entire manuscript.

I am highly grateful to Dr Preeti Trivedi, Head, Department of Ancient Indian History Culture and Archaeology, Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University and to Dr Pradip Meshram, Former Head at R.T.M Nagpur University, who willingly allowed me to study the megalithic iron objects from the sites excavated by their department, and also allowed me to clip samples, without which metallographic and chemical studies could have never been done. Without getting access to these iron artefacts, this work would have never seen the light of day. I am also thankful to Dr P. Khobragade and Dr Prabash Sahu, faculty members at the same department, who were ever so supportive of my work and always gave me a warm smile and enquired about the progress of my work. Dr Khobragade always had a few encouraging words to say right from my student days at this department.

I am highly indebted to Dr B.C. Deotare, Former Head, Department of Ancient Indian History Culture And Archaeology, Deccan College: Post-Graduate and Research Institute, Pune and to Dr Sushma Deo, Head, for allowing me to study the megalithic iron objects from the sites excavated by their department and also to clip samples, without which metallographic and chemical studies could never have been done. I am also thankful to Dr R, K Mohanty who willingly shared his knowledge about the sites he excavated and even took time to read through my drafts. Dr Vasant Shinde, Vice- Chancellor of Deccan College, always gave me any help I needed and enquired about the progress of my work, Dr Abhijit Dandekar, Dr Shantanu Vaidya, Dr Gurudas Shete and Dr Kanti Pawar always had a few encouraging words to say right from my student days at this department. Shantanu Vaidya always made sure my artefacts were kept ready before I reached the department and willingly allowed me to sit in his room and work.

Prof. P. Ajithprasad, Head, Department of Archaeology, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda and faculty members Dr Sushmita Sen and S. Pratapchandran are to be thanked for their cooperation, constructive criticism and encouragement during my study period. I would also like to acknowledge the help provided by Mr. Bhupesh Pathak, our librarian, who helped me find the required reading material. I must express my gratitude to my senior, Dr Sharmi Chakravarthy, at the Centre for Archaeological Studies and Training in Eastern India, Kolkata and to Dr Suchira Roychowdhury 'Mussolini' who have brought out the best in me during my worst days. She was never tired of my constant questioning and grumbling. Special mention should be made of Dr Parth Chauhan for constantly egging me on to finish my thesis. I am highly indebted to Prof. Gautam Sengupta, of Visva Bharati University, Shantiniketan and Dr Bishnupriya Basak of Calcutta University for having faith in me.

If there is one person who always encouraged me to nurture my dream to become an archaeologist it was my high school History teacher Miss Priyadarshinee Guha. She always wanted me to dream big and soar high. She was my first mentor who encouraged me to read and question.

Archaeology means months of fieldwork but I always had the best time of my life in the field due to my friends who accompanied me smilingly to the field and rode the motorbike for hours although they were suffering excruciating back aches. A big 'Thank You' to Pramod, Nagsen Bhau, Subodh Bhau, Ashwin and Ankush for always being there for me. Without them, all fieldwork in Gadchiroli would never have been possible. Special mention should be made of Prachi Joshi who always held my hand and made me believe in myself.

Friends never let you fall apart, and my best friends always stood by me like a rock. Charu di, Urmi di, Mithu di, Sharmistha di, Shoumita di, Smitha chechi, Rajesh bhaiya, Prerna, Lamminthang, Brice Girbal, Avi, Ajmal, Prateek, Durga, Samhita, Vidhi, Jinal, Amrita, Sinjini, Sneh and Moni always had their faith in me and never stopped being my well-wishers. Soumi di and Kanchi dreamt with me of becoming archaeologists and were always by my side. Special mention must be made of Mithu di who took out time from her busy schedule and did all my last minute corrections even though she was neck-deep in work. During my first few months in Baroda I met Annapurna, Shraddha, Sneha, Danira and Tejal who helped me through the ups and downs of my Ph.D. journey.

Special mention must be made of Rajalakshmi who has tolerated me as her roommate and never complained about the lights being on till 5 in the morning. She always knew how to make me laugh by cracking silly stupid jokes and singing random weird songs even during difficult times.

I would be failing in my duty if I do not mention the constant encouragement provided by my friends at every point of the work. My special thanks to Vrusabh Mahesh, Ritvik Balvally, Gopal, Navjot Kour, Trupti Dubey, Barkha, Naphi, Gayathri, Nisha Das, Oyni Tatak, Jui Ganu, Khushboo Parmar, Suruchika and Rucha Pardikar for their zeal and constant appreciation of my efforts.

My gratitude to Siddha Shah for helping me prepares all my technical drawings as and when I required them. She was always ready to help with a smile on her face whenever I needed it, sometimes even during her vacation.

While I stayed in the SD Hall, MSU Girls Hostel, my well-wishers Rupalim Ma'am, Rajni Ma'am and Janvi Ma'am always had a kind word to say whenever I met them. Pintu Bhai and Chetna Bhabhi provided me with really good food at their canteen and readily made customized orders for me anytime I asked.

The years I spent in the Department of Archaeology, MSU were made enjoyable by many people. Most important among them would be Lala Bhai and Hansa Maasi who would always have a cup of tea and some kind words for me. They also kept me smiling with occasional leg pulling.

While I was spending years away from my family, Bindu Ma'm, Kannan and Mallu alongwith Appu never made me realize the distance. I was always welcome at their home and in their hearts. Last but not the least, this work would never have seen the light of day had it not been for my family. My father with his never-ending faith in me and my work, my mother with her loving care and support were my pillars of strength. Not to forget my sister Ju and her family Sumo Bhai, Coco and my baby nephew Pogo with all their love and words of encouragement supported me at each and every step.

I gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance provided by ICHR for the study.

OISHI ROY