

HARAPPAN SETTLEMENTS IN SINDH

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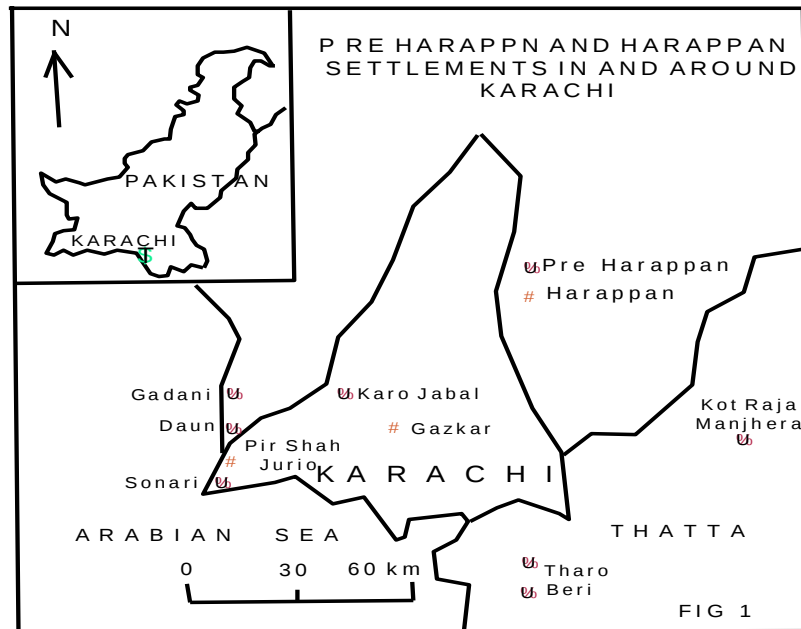
ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the growth of Neolithic farming settlements in different parts of Balochistan and Sindh, ultimately led to urbanization. The discoveries of Amri, Kot Diji and Tharro as fortified Pre-Harappan urban settlements provided evidences of development and progress of Indus civilization, which started from Mehargarh and ended up at Moen-jo-Daro. Keeping this view discoveries of Pre-Harappan and Harappan settlements in Karachi and its adjacent coastal districts of Thatta and Lasbela in Sindh and Balochistan have remained important field of interest for researchers to explore these settlements and excavate artefacts. The chipped stone assemblages and potteries excavated from the Pre-Harappan and Harappan settlements provide valuable information about their development in the coastal region of Sindh and Balochistan.

Keywords: Indus Civilization, Urbanisation, Harappan Settlement, Exploration

INTRODUCTION

Discovery of Mehargarh dated about 7000 BCE as earliest farming settlement in Pakistan provide a foundation for the later development of pre-historic urban settlements, began around 4000 B.C. in Rehman Dehri and culminated around 2500 BCE in Harappa and Moen-Jo Daro. The pre-Harappan age is attributed with the beginning of urban culture and knowledge of metallurgy, fortification of settlements, painted decorated wheel made potteries, different types of flint blades and use of copper and bronze implements. The earliest fortified town discovered in Pakistan located in Khyber Pukhtunkhawa is Rehman Dheri dated 4000 BCE. Discoveries of Pre-Harappan settlements of Nal and Kuli Gul Mohammad in Balochistan and Amri and Kot Diji in Sindh as Pre-Harappa fortified towns, which flourished from 3600 to 3000 BCE prove that the region started to transform in modern development, which led the future development of great cities and Harappan age of Indus civilization.



Source: Map designed by author(s)

Discoveries of Pre-Harappan and Harappan settlements in the Karachi region and adjacent areas are important in retrospect. Exploration of Upper Paleolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic sites in Karachi provide evidences that region was inhabited by Paleolithic hunters and Neolithic farmers and fishermen (Khan, 1979 and Biagi, 2010). Therefore, no reason is to believe that the region was also important during Pre-Harappan and Harappan periods. The excavated sites are located in the coastal region where on one hand fishing activity was dominated and on the other hand in the ephemeral stream valleys and loess deposited topography where grazing and farming were dominated. Therefore, discoveries of Pre Harappan and Harappan artefacts are important to understand the impacts of development of Pre-Harappan and Harappan culture in this region.

The study areas are located between latitudes $24^{\circ} 52' N$ to $25^{\circ} 10' N$ and longitudes $65^{\circ} 40' E$ to $68^{\circ} 13' E$. The region is extended in the east up to Tharo about 45 kms from Karachi City and in the west up to Gadani about 40 kms from Karachi City along the Makran coast of Balochistan. Geologically the region is dominated by marine origin sedimentary outcrops

mostly limestone and shale belong to tertiary geological period. In Karchat, Thano Bula Khan, Ongar and Jhimpir nodules of flint pertain to Ranikot and Lakhi formation are found in the Eocene outcrops of limestone (Blandford, 1880). In the Gadani coast outcrops of limestone pertain to par formation of cretaceous age exist where red-light grey nodules of flints are found. The existence of flint outcrops in the region support this idea that stone artefacts used by prehistoric people in this region were made from these sources of rocks. The Pleistocene and early Holocene geology of the region is important particularly in view of this fact that rise of prehistoric culture took place in these two epochs. Many prehistoric settlements in the region were found on the conglomerate terraces and loess deposited surface. The palaeo-climatic studies reveal that the Pleistocene epoch faced several glacial and interglacial as well as stadial and inter-stadial phases. During the glacial ice age global sea level dropped to 300 meters deep and present shoreline receded up to 400 meters towards sea. As a result continental shelf exposed and fine materials like silt and clay were picked up by strong south- west winds and deposited over the land like blanket. The process lasted at the end of Pleistocene and beginning of Holocene when last glacial phase ended. These loess deposits were suitable places for the development of prehistoric farming and grazing settlements, because after rain loess deposited areas were covered with grass and appropriate for animals grazing and farming. The impact of glacial and interglacial phases can also be seen in form of conglomerate deposits which formed terraces with the change of base level of local streams and diversion of streams. These conglomerate terraces and loess deposited river valleys were likely places of prehistoric settlements. The arid climatic characteristic of the region is favourable for the exploration of prehistoric sites because the prehistoric artefacts are exposed on the areas because of erosion by wind and rain.

PRE HARAPPAN SETTLEMENTS

Tharo and Beri: Along the National Highway about 45 km from Karachi City near Gujo town a pre Harappan fortified settlement is located on the flat top limestone ridge locally called Thari or Tharo. Its geographical location is 24° 43' 27" N to 67° 44' 78" N. The site was first reported by Cousens (1929) as a walled Neolithic settlement. Majumdar (1934) provided a detailed description of the site. He believed on the basis of chipped flint assemblages that Tharo was merely a flint-knapping industry rather than a dwelling site (Biagi, 2010).

Figure-1: The site of Tharro



Source: Photo by author

Figure-2: Tharro and Assemblages



Source: Photo by author

Figure-3: Pre Harappan or Amri settlement



Source: Photo by author

Figure-4: Pre Harappan or Amri settlement



Source: Photo by author

In 1950, Piggot excavated the site and believed Tharo was an island in Pre-Harappan period. Khan A.R. visited the site in 1979 and considered it a Neolithic site because he collected lunates and micro burins (Khan, 1979). In 1997 and 1998 the site was visited by authors along with Khan A.R. and collected hundreds of long size blades. The largest was about 4 cm long. These blades were retouched and un-retouched, flaked cores and scrapers. The shape and size of blades show characteristics of Pre-Harappan or Amri site. The settlement was surrounded by two rocky promontory semi-circular walls. The outer edges of two sides of ridge form cliffs. Two baked earthen bowls were also found, buried in the remnants of settlement which also show Amri pottery. In 2000 the site was revisited along with Khan A.R. and Biagi P. and collected samples of marine and mangrove shell middens. In 2013, the site was again visited and flint implements and shell middens were collected. In 2004 and 2009 Biagi visited and collected chipped tools and shell middens from Tharo and Beri. Beri is another ship like limestone flat top ridge located about 2 km from Tharo which was also believed a Pre-Harappan island settlement. The radio carbon dates of gastropods shells and mangrove *Terebralia* shells of Tharo and Beri were 3300 BCE and 3200 BCE (Biagi, 2010).

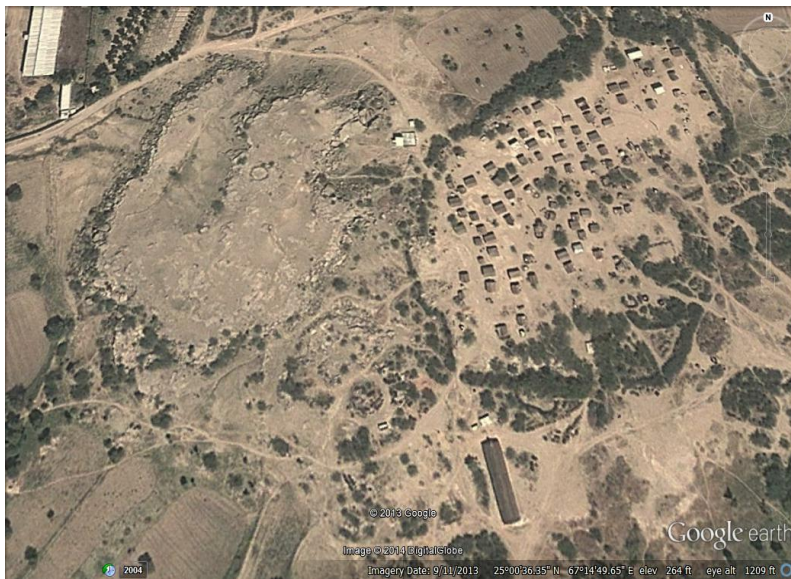
Kot Raja Manjera: About 15 km away from Thatta and 5 km before Jhirik along the Indus Highway a flat top small ridge is located called Kot Raja Manjera, the Manjera was a Buddhist ruler while Kot means fort. Kot Raja Manjera was first identified as Buddhist site and a stupa in 1852 by W. Cole, a British Collector of Karachi. The site was revisited by D. Ross in 1882. He wrote 'three miles below Jhirik there is a low hill covered with ruins, called by the natives *Kafir Kot*. Khan A.R. visited the area in 1970s and collected flint blades, pieces of pottery. He also identified remnants of stone walled promontory which he believed not more than 2 meters high. He believed the site was probably Neolithic or Pre-Harappan fortified settlement (Khan, 1979). In 1998 the site was visited by the authors along with Khan A.R. and students of Geography Department, Karachi University and collected flint assemblages and pieces of potteries. In 2004, Biagi visited the area and collected shell middens from the site. He confirmed Khan's findings and identified as Pre-Harappan site (Biagi, 2010).

Figure-5: Kot Raja Manjhera



Source: Photo by author

Figure-6: Kot Kara Jabal



Source: Photo by author

Kot Kara Jabal: The Pre-Harappan site of Kot Kara Jabal is located along the Konkar River in Karachi. It is a fortified settlement built over a conglomerate terrace. The remnant of promontory wall, pottery and flint assemblages were found during field visits in 1997 and 2013. It was first identified by Khan A.R in 1979 (Khan, 1979). The promontory wall of the settlement can be seen in the satellite image.

Gadani and Daun: Gadani is a fishing village and a small harbor, located about 40 km from Karachi. The out crops of Gadani are important because the red, grey and light green colour.

Figure-7: Chert nodules at Gadani coast



Figure-8: Pre-Harappan Assemblage in loses deposits at Gadani



Source: Photo by author

Figure-9: Pre-Harappan site at Daun



Source: Photo by author

Pre-Harappan site at Daun and a pebble artefact, used for breaking shells flint nodules were found in the outcrops of cretaceous Par lime stone. Near Gadani village and along the road goes to Gadani ship breaking and Phowari red flint assemblages, large cores and blocks of flints were found in the loess deposits. In 1998 and 2000 during field visits along with Khan A.R and Biagi P. shell middens were found along the coast of Daun near pillow lava outcrops. Its geographical location is $25^{\circ} 8' 37''$ N to $66^{\circ} 21' 72''$ N East. Khan (1979) reported these sites as Neolithic. Biagi (2012) reported it as Neolithic and Pre-Harappan site between 5000 to 3000 BCE. He also visited the area in 2004 and 2011 and found flint assemblages in the area. The radiocarbon date of one shell midden assemblage was found 3000 BCE which confirms it as pre Harappan sites.

Sonari: Along the coast and the mouth of Hub River an eroded hillock is located in between ridges of Oligocene-Eocene formation. This place is locally called Sonari, which was the name of a fisherwoman who lived nearby fishing village. The site of Sonari is located over this flat hillock. Khan first identified it in 1979 as a Neolithic fishing settlement. During field visits along with Khan in 1997, 1999, 2004 and in 2013 along with Italian archaeologists Biagi and Nisbet remnants of stone structure, pieces of red potteries, flint artefacts, marine and mangrove shell middens were found. The flint artefacts like lunates, bores, pieces of retouched blades, sinkers as well as red burnished and light coloured pieces of potteries were collected within the remnants of stone structure settlement and outside of it. The colours of flint chipped tools were red and light brown. They were likely taken from Gadani an outcrop which is about 20 km from Sonari. Marine and mangrove

shell middens were found within the settlement and outside of it. The shell middens were carbon dated and they were found about 3200 BCE. It can be said that the Sonari was originally a Neolithic fishing settlement and it continued a fishing settlement in the Pre-Harappan period. Near the settlement a small embankment was found constructed in the Neolithic period to store rain water runoff.

Figure-10: The pre-historic sites of Sonari and shell middens



Figure-11: Pre-Harappan assemblages at Sonari



Source: Photo by author

HARAPPAN SETTLEMENTS

Due to advancement and urban development Harappan settlements were distinct from Pre-Harappan settlements. With the end of Pre-Harappan

period, the period of Harappan civilization started ranging between 2700 BCE to about 1500BP. Harappan civilization flourished in the vast region of India and Pakistan from eastern edge of Balochistan and Khyber Pukhtunkhawa in Pakistan to the eastern edge of Punjab, Rajasthan in India (Dales, 1982). Moen Jo Daro and Harappa were two core cities which were the magnificent examples of town planning, architecture and civilization. In the Karachi region number of Harappan Khan A.R. explored settlements in late 1970s (Khan.1979).

Pir Shah Jurio: Pir Shah Jurio was identified as Harappan harbour (Khan, 1979), located near to the mouth of Hub River over conglomerate terrace. It is now a grave yard and shrine of a saint known as Pir Shah. In 1999, 2000, 2004 and 2013, the site was visited and perforated potteries, flint assemblage were collected from the site.

Figure-12: Harappan site of Pir Shah Jurio along the Hub River



Source: Photo by author

Figure-13: Harappan artefacts at Pir Shah Jurio



Source: Photo by author

Gazkar: Gazkar is an important Harappan settlement located along the Super Highway near Langheji River. The site was located over the mound of clay and shale. Foundation walls of stone structure of settlement can be seen in the site. The whole site is covered with pieces of red potteries. The site was identified by Khan in 1979. In 1998, 2004 and 2013 the site was visited along with Khan and Biagi. Pieces of baked bangles, pieces of perforated pottery, remnant of furnace and few pieces of flint implements were collected. The most important feature of the site is its foundation stones structure. The unfortunate thing is that construction work has been started in the site area and half of its site has already been destroyed.

Figure-14: Harappan site of Gazkar and stone structure of houses



Source: Photo by author

Figure-15: Harappan artefacts collected by author from Gazkar



Figure-16: Harappan artefacts: backed tablets, petrified wood and a piece of furnace collected by author from Gazkar (Langheji) in 2013.



Source: Photo by author

CONCLUSION

The discoveries of early Harappan and Harappan settlements in Karachi and its surrounding areas reveal that the region remained important in the development of prehistoric culture in the coastal region of Sindh and Balochistan. The discoveries of pre-historic coastal settlements and artefacts provide good understanding that how prehistoric people lived in the coastal environment used sea foods like mangrove shells, gastropods, oysters and fish. The exploration of artefacts collected from prehistoric farming settlements located in loess surface and along ephemeral streams indicate the technical advancement of inhabitants in flaking and making sophisticated chipped tools and potteries.

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