"Kot Kori"—a Site of Indus Civilization on the Edge of the Rann of Cutch

The number of sites of the Indus Civilization within the Indus plain area is very small compared to those found in the Sind Kohistan, the Manchhar lake area, the Kirthar piedmont, the valleys of the extinct rivers like the Ghaggar and the Hakra and the Cutch-Kathiawar belt. Reason, obviously, is the bulldozing effect of the gigantic machine of the Indus River itself. It has, either completely erased innumerable sites within its range, or buried them deep under its upbuilding alluvium. The few known sites in the plain area are just accidental survivals.

The extensive explorations carried out by Cousens and Majumdar in the first half of this century, did not produce any site older than early Muslim or Buddhist period in the Lower Sind. This, in a way, gave birth to a misconception that the whole of the Lower Sind is a new land and was occupied by the sea at the time of the Indus Civilization. Some writers carried the sea even upto Amri, near Sehwan in support of their preconceived notions. There is enough evidence to prove the contrary.

Tharre Fort near Gujjo reported on by Majumdar and Piggott, Budhjo Takkar by Lambrick and Kot Raja Manjhera by the present writer are all located on isolated hills on the edge of the plain. Garho Bhiro, near Nuhato north of Naukot, on the bank of the Hakra was the first Harappan site in the lower Sind, reported by Lambrick and further studied by Dr. Baloch. In 1973, Dr. N. A. Baloch reported three Harappan sites on the right bank of an old channel, identified by Haig as the Ren River. These three sites—Karahya Pir, Markhan and Koonj Sar—in this very order, start about 20 miles south of Badin and extend well into the present Rann of Cutch. Their levels range from less than 15 to less than

5 ft, above mean sea level. The outer sites are being attacked by the tidal waves.

"Kot Kori" Site

This site was discovered by the writer on the 3rd March 1978. It is located on the right bank of the Puran Dhoro, opposite Ali Bandar. The road to Ali Bandar cuts right through the site. It is a fairly big but low mound, extending north-south on either side of the road. There are some small rises detached from the main site due to erosion. 10 ft. contour runs close to the mound. The mound is made up of baked bricks of the houses, pottery and other material. It appears to have suffered much from erosion, particularly on the eastern side. In some cuttings the base of the settlement is exposed, which is entirely river alluvium, full of fresh water shells. There is no indication of marine deposits below the base.

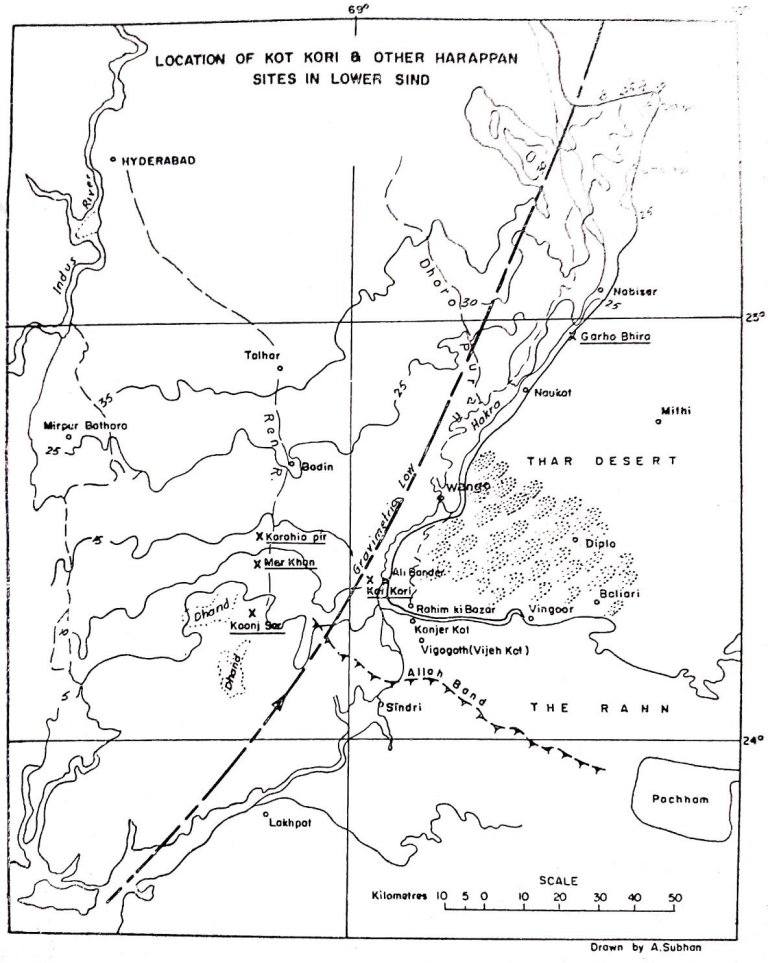
The material collected at the site contains most of the characteristic objects found on the Indus Valley sites. They include: black-on-red ware of typical shape and decoration, perforated ware, clay and shell bangles, terracotta tables, fragments of toy carts, baked clay balls, probably used as missiles with slings, smaller clay balls, some fragments of copper objects, chert blades, grinding stones and large marine gastropods, sawn to make shell bangles.

Houses are built of baked bricks. These bricks are still intact and are being dug out at present either by some local people or some contractor for construction. The whole material is strongly bound by clay cement. Objects can be removed only with some difficulty. Salt impregnation is also present.

Importance of these Southern Sites

All the Indus Valley sites located on the edge and even within the Rann are most important for the study of palaeogeography and the study of natural processes operating in this area to understand and solve the present problems and comprehend the future ones.

An immediate and urgent need is to protect all the prehistoric sites along the Ren, the Puran and the Hakra Rivers and carry out an inter-disciplinary study of the whole area along the sea and the marshland. The very presence of these sites makes one thing quite



Drawn by A.Subhan

clear that at least for the last 4–5 millennia the whole area has been habitable land. They provide a benchmark in time to work out the history of the Indus Delta on the one hand and the Thar Desert on the other.

Opposite the site of Kot Kori a channel appears branching off rom the Puran or the lower Hakra. After running slightly north of east, in shallow sweeping curves upto the village Dhakkan, it abruptly turns right more than 90° and continues south in a more regularly meandering course, past Rahim ki Bazar into the Rann and branching there to make a delta-like feature, on which Kanjarkot and Wagoja Kot (Vijeh Kot) are located.

Northward from Dhakkan upto Wango, many remnants of meanders and sections of the channel are shown on the old top sheets. This indicates that the Hakra River some time in the past used to flow directly from Wango through this channel upto Rahim ki Bazar and into the Rann. During some period of low rainfall, the upper part of the channel became clogged with sand and the Hakra River adopted a new channel or confined itself to a pre-existing distributary of its own, further west. The area between the two channels was added to the Thar Desert. Below Wango, where the Hakra meets the Puran, it loses its name and is, at present, known as the Puran Dhoro.

East of the Rahim ki Bazar, there are a number of creek-like embayments into the edge of the desert, appearing like continuations of the Rann. From these creeks drainage appears to be branching off, building levees and making bird-feet-delta like features into the Rann. Whether these features mark the local drainage from the stabilized dunes of the desert, during some more pluvial period in the past or some branches of, or the main Hakra itself, passed through this triangular projection of the desert, south of Chhor, is difficult to say at the moment.

The most curious feature of this area is the depression starting from Chhor, where it is below 20 ft contour, running south-west upto the Rann of Cutch. Chhor is about 100 miles from the Rann, as straight distance and much more along the river course. E. A.

Glennie's map of this paper "Gravity Data and Crustal Warping N. W. Pakistan———" shows the axis of the deepest part of the basement east of the Indus, passing through this area. The process of downwarping along the Chhor–Ali Bandar depression appears to be still continuing. This downwarp continues north to merge into the Sulaiman foredeep, which like the Khirthar foredeep, along the western margin of Sind is still sinking. This could be the reason for persistence and even accentuation of this depression, sinking of the Harappan sites to the sea level or even below it and also the shifting of the river channels westward, from the area, now desert, to the axis of this downwarp.

Evidence from the Desert Fringe

East of Rahim ki Bazar, along the edge of the Rann, we find some low beach ridges or old shorelines, all covered by marine gastropods, broken by man for eating and a few potsherds of undiagnostic nature. Further inland, there is an apron of low dunes, fringing the fixed or fossil older dunes of the main desert. These low and younger generation dunes display two phases of deposition, separated by a phase of weathering and erosion. At present the area is undergoing gulley erosion, which has exposed in the deep cuttings the sections of the old material. They reveal interesting evidence.

The erosion surface between the two depositional phases preserves some potsherds *in situ*, a few of them appear of red burnished ware, similar to that found around Karachi, where it belongs to Neolithic period. No stone tools were found. The material is also scanty and further investigations to confirm this local evidence are needed. Further, the sequence of deposition indicates changing conditions of environment. First, the deposition occurred under dry conditions; then weathering and erosion under moisture conditions accompanied by human occupation; then again deposition of sand under drier conditions; finally followed by gulley erosion under present conditions. Identical situation was noted by the writer near Karachi in the Port Qasim area, where a number of Neolithic occupations, with Red Burnished Ware, chert implements and marine shells were found in the cliff sands. If the presence of this culture

along the fringes of the desert is confirmed, it would be an interesting development.

In the Karachi area there are already many sites of this, probably, late Neolithic culture. It extends from the Karachi coast, all along the eastern Baluchistan upto Loralai, in the form of K. G. M. ware. With its fortified sites, Red Burnished ware with black decoration, beautiful clay bangles with triangular cross-section, and agricultural economy, it could be another claimant for the parentage of the Indus Civilization. Though in Karachi area there is a considerable gap between the two. The whole Balakotian phase may perhaps intervene between the two.

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