

HARAPPAN TERMINOLOGIES

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ABSTRACT

After the discovery of Harappa in 1921 many sites with same archaeological material have been explored and excavated in India and Pakistan, particularly in Indus and Ghaggar basins; as well as the area of Cholistan in Pakistan and Gujarat in India. The terminology used for this cultural complex is the “Harappan culture”. Sites with the same specific types or classes of artefacts are usually grouped into the same archaeological culture. Archaeologists have further divided the Harappan cultural sequence into three periods i.e.; ‘Pre-Harappan’, ‘Mature Harappan’ and ‘Post-Harappan’. This periodization is based on artefactual material recovered from different sites. But, some scholars used terms like ‘Early-Harappan’ and ‘Late-Harappan’ to indicate the transitional phases between above mentioned three tier periodization. To avoid confusion regarding these terminologies most of the scholars treated ‘Pre-Harappan’ and ‘Early-Harappan’ as the same; and ‘Post-Harappan’ and ‘Late-Harappan’ similarly. But the problems rose with some ‘so called’ Post or Late-Harappan regional cultures like the Bara culture of the Sutlej basin and OCP culture of the Ganga-Yamuna basin. Bara culture which spread over the areas of present day Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh existed with Pre-Harappan and Mature Harappan cultures and continued in the Late-Harappan period without any break. The earliest dates for the above culture come from the site of Mahorana in district Sangrur, Punjab i.e. 2300 BCE; is interlocked with Painted Grey ware culture at the site of Bhagwanpura district Kurukshetra, Haryana. Another culture i.e. OCP remains problematic. It doesn’t come up with Pre-Harappan and Harappan by excavation but the dating provided by TL method put it back to the latter half of third millennium BCE. At the same point of time Pre-Harappan and Harappan culture were flourishing in Sutlej and Ghaggar basin. So, the question that arises is that in which particular terminological bracket can these cultures be placed? My paper attempts to look at this problematic issue by taking up the instance of the Bara culture.

KEYWORDS: Harappan, Periodization, Archaeologists, Bara Culture, Ghaggar

INTRODUCTION

The discovery of the sites of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro in 1921 and 1922 respectively pushed back the dates of the Proto-Historic period from 1500 BCE to the third millennium BCE. The then director general of Archaeological Survey of India, Sir John Marshall termed this culture as the ‘Indus Civilization’. After that many sites with the same archaeological material have been excavated and explored in India and Pakistan and even in Afghanistan; particularly in the Indus and Ghaggar basins; as well as the area of Cholistan in Pakistan and Gujarat in India. Today, this cultural complex is largely known as the ‘Harappan Culture’.

Sites with the same specific types or classes of artefacts are usually grouped into the same archaeological culture. Stratification analysis of these sites suggests that the Harappan period can be divided into the Pre-Harappan, Harappan and Post-Harappan. Some scholars also used terms like ‘Early-Harappan’ and ‘Late-Harappan’ to indicate the transitional phases between the above mentioned three tiers per iodization. To avoid confusion regarding these terminologies most of

the scholars treated 'Pre-Harappan' and 'Early-Harappan' as the same; and 'Post-Harappan' and 'Late-Harappan' similarly. The Post/Late-Harappan term that is used to identify the last phase of the Harappan culture is identified and scattered in a wide area in different regions. According to Mughal (1990) "the 'Late-Harappan' with reference to the principal and best known sites yielding distinct material is used here to express (a) chronological position of such 'late' material, (b) cultural continuity with the Harappan civilization, and (c) character of specific archaeological material."ⁱ If these three criteria are enough to set a culture into the 'Late-Harappan' box then we face a serious problem vis-a-vis many archaeological cultures. Prime among these are the Bara culture of the Sutlej and the Ghaggar basins and OCP culture of the Ghaggar, the Yamuna and the Ganga basins.

Ochre-coloured Pottery (OCP) culture: As the name indicates the pottery type OCP is ochreous in colour. It is ill fired, wheel made, fine to medium clay, red slipped with painted with black colour. This ware is mostly scattered in the Ganga-Yamuna doab. The main character of this pottery type is that if we rub its surface it leaves ochreous colour on the fingers. It was first discovered at the site of Hastinapura by B. B. Lal stratigraphically from its lowest levels in 1954.ⁱⁱ The same pottery was earlier reported from Bisauli in district Badaun and Rajpur Parsu in district Bijnor of Uttar Pradesh and from the same sites the so called 'Copper Hoards' were also reported. After that many sites yielded the same pottery complex.

The entire red ware belonging to the OCP period can be divided into three groups: (1) genuine OCP as found at Atranjikhera, Saipai, Lal Qila, Noh etc.; (2) OCP with Harappan influence as found at Bahadrabad, Ambakheri etc.; (3) Late-Harappan ware with OCP influence as found at Alamgirpur, Bargaon etc.ⁱⁱⁱ Suraj Bhan suggested on typological grounds the classification of the so called OCP into two broad groups' viz. (a) OCP (Ambakheri) and (b) OCP (Atranjikhera) after the type sites representing the characteristic ceramic complexes of the two groups. He also pointed out that the OCP (Ambakheri) concentrated mainly in the northern doab, represented a mere degenerated stage of the Mitathal IIB ware. The OCP (Atranjikhera) on the other hand represented a different tradition which was more common in the Central doab and the adjoining parts of the Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh^{iv}. Sharma compare the Bahadrabad OCP's painted motifs with Bara painted motifs.^v The influence of the Harappan on OCP is visible only in terms of a few limited shapes.

The copper hoards were reported from many sites like Bahadrabad in district Haridwar, Nasirpur in district Saharanpur, Jhinhana in Muzaffarnagar, Saipai in district Etawah, Bisauli and Rajpur Parsu and OCP was also reported from these sites. A dozen sherds from four sites, Atranjikhera, Lal Qila, Jhinhana and Nasirpur, were examined in the Archaeological Research Laboratory, Oxford and were dated to between 2600 and 1200 BC by the thermoluminescence method.^{vi}

Bara Culture: The Bara assemblage was discovered by Y.D. Sharma in 1955 while excavating at the site of the Bara.^{vii} After the discovery of the site a new chapter was opened in the field of Harappan civilization studies. The pottery of the Bara is well levigated, wheel-turned and having a slip of brownish dull colour with paintings in chocolate or black colour. It is well known for its exterior incised decoration. House structures associated with the Bara culture were of *kankar* stone and mud bricks. Articles of copper, faience and bone also constituted a part of Bara assemblage. The excavated sites where Bara material is found are the sites of Bara, Ropar, Dhermajra, Kotla Nihang Khan of district Rupnagar, Sanghol and Dadheri of Fatehgarh Sahib, Rohira and Mahorana of Sangrur, Sunet of Ludhiana, Katpalon and Nagar of Jullundur in Punjab, UT Chandigarh, Raja Karan ka Qila, Bhagwanpura and Daulatpur of Kurukshetra district, Balu of Jind, Banawali and Kunal of Fatehabad in Haryana and Hulas and Bargaon in Saharanpur and Alamgirpur in

Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh.

Earlier, it was propounded that the Bara culture had a generic relationship with the Pre-Harappan culture (Kalibangan I). Later, archaeologists changed the notion towards a linear cultural progression to maintain three cultures i.e., Pre-Harappan, Harappan and Bara, running straight down the timeline with the latter stages resulting from the former. Now the problem is that we can't classify Bara culture as a merely Late-Harappan culture. Since Bara cultural traits were found with Pre-Harappan at Mahorana and Rohira, with Mature-Harappan at Ropar, Kotla Nihang Khan, Dhermajra and Chandigarh, Late-Harappan at Banawali, Bhagwanpura, Dadheri, Katpalon, Nagar etc. one cannot simply fit this culture into the Late-Harappan "box".

Sharma grouped the material yielded from Mahorana Period I into two sub period; IA and IB and dated the both c. 2300 BCE to 2100 BCE and 2100 BCE to 1900 BCE respectively.^{viii} "The salient feature of the Mahorana excavation is that in a deposit measuring on an average 3.10 m in thickness, pottery of both the Pre-Harappan and Bara traditions is found intermingled from the base to the top of Period I."^{ix} The earliest dates known for the Bara culture are c. 2300 BCE. The excavation of Bhagwanpura district Kurukshetra has yielded an interlocked assemblage of Late-Harappan along with Bara and Painted Grey Ware (PGW).^x According to Agarwal "More than a score ¹⁴C dates are available for the PGW sites. Except for TF-191, all the other dates provide a bracket of c.800-350 BC for the PGW."^{xi} Because the Baran were living with PGW people in their later stages, that is why the latest dates for the Bara culture if not 800 BCE should be at least 1000 BCE. Now, we have a time span for the cultural tradition of Bara culture between c.2300 BCE the earliest and c.1000 BCE the latest.

The above mentioned cultures have a rural rather than an urban character. The problem is that in which cultural frame should we fit these two cultures? The dating of both cultures crosscut the dates of Harappan and Late-Harappan. Bara culture has its ancestral linkage in terms of painting motifs of pottery with Pre-Harappan cultures of Kacchi plain, Hakra, Ravi and Kalibangan I.

CONCLUSIONS

Both Bara and OCP material has also been found with Mature Harappan at some sites. And both Bara and OCP material continues in the Post-Harappan context. The terminological confusion calls for a conference of archaeologists to decide upon some general system of terms for material assemblages like the ones discussed above. According to Possehl "the tools to accomplish this task are available today and they need only be applied to the material in hand and still buried in ancient settlements."^{xii}

The two cultures discussed above though termed as 'Late-Harappan' are not technically falling in this time bracket; moreover on the basis of the study of the artefactual and structural remains of the OCP and Bara culture we can conclude that they have a character distinct from that of the Harappan culture.

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