Human Remains On The Spring Of Kattha: A Preliminary Report Of Archaeological Explorations In Khoshab, Pakistan

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Abstract
Khoshab, located below the Salt Ranges, yields important artefacts of historical value. This paper attempts to explore the area with an object to update the scholarship and to understand about the archaeological remains with reference to water sources in the vicinities. Our explorations in this area noticed three sites of archaeological significance besides Nari, dated back to Kot Digi period on the single water source. In this area the source of ground water is saline, for drinking and cultivation purposes as we have noticed on the other sites of Indus Valley Civilisation. Therefore, this paper offers a study on the same water source was continuously utilised by the people of early settlers of Kot-Dijian Period to the contemporary settlers throughout the history. It is noticed that this water was utilised even in the regionalisation phase around 3000 BC, integration phase around 2500 BC, and localisation phase around 1800 BC continuously as marked by Nari. Which is continued by the site of classical period site of Rorapindh, can be dated somewhere around Indo-Scythian and succeeding periods between 1st century BC to 5th century AD. Which is further continued to use by people of Kattha Sagral of Hindu Shahi period 7th to 10th century AD. These three mounds visibly show the continue utilization of same water source throughout the history It is a different tradition among towns and villages utilising the spring water rather underground source, according to the availability of the best water in this terrain. However, there are the gaps between these historical sites, informed us from surface information which will be filled by careful excavations on these sites.

Keywords: Khoshab, Indus Valley Civilisation, Gandhara, Water Sources, Hindu Shahi, Archaeology of Salt Range.

1. Introduction
District Khoshab is situated at the plain area in the lap of the Salt Range between Indus and Jehlum Rivers. Geographically, this 6511 km² area expands between Northing 32° 01’ 38” Easting 71° 49’ 02” and Northing 32° 37’ 55” Easting 72° 43’ 36”. This District is surrounded by six Districts of Chakwal and Mianwali in the North, Jehlum and Sargoda in the East, Bakkhar in the West and Jhang in the South.
In order to understand the literal meaning of the name of proper town Khoshab, also applied as the broader nomenclature of this District, one needs to decompose the Persian word with “kosh” means “nice” and “āb” means “water”. Thus, it can be translated as “the land of nice water”, however, the underground water in Khoshab is Saline. Might be this word is indicating towards the difference of taste in water in the land between two rivers of sweet water.

This District can be approached from Lilla Interchange on Motor Way (M-2), between Lahore and Islamabad. The road bifurcates and, that lead towards the West, let us approach directly to Katṭha Sagral. This road is connected by Sargoda road at the same village. Thus, at this connection, a crossroad appears. Near to this crossroad, a temple site is located, can be reached through the way leading to North from the point. This Road, to the South, directly let us approach town Khoshab; however, a jeep-able track between the fields connects this road with the Site at Nāri. During this activity, another important archaeological site in Rora Pindh was also academically visited. This site is accessible from the earlier mentioned road.

2. **Previous studies**

For the first time in Northern Punjab de Terra and Paterson conducted a systematic study on prehistory of Soan Valley in 1939, and explored nine sites of Lower Palaeolithic in this area. The sites include Malakpur, Milestone 163, Adiala, Hassan Khan Dhok, Section 11, Chak Singhu, Milestone 23, Balawal and Gila Kalan. Since that after, there is an academic gap of four decades in studying pre/proto-history of Northern Punjab. However, revival in research of this study area is with the contribution of Haleem and Dani. On one hand, Halim embarked to conduct excavation during 1971 at Sarai Khola, which revealed the archaeological material, significantly relevant to early Harappan period. On the other hand, Dani explored and documented the site of Musa Khel in District Mianwaali during 1971-72. Thus, investigations in the area again got a new start after a long interval. In this connection, the exploration based activities and further excavations of Rafiq Mughal during 1972 at Jhang in District Cambellpur also resulted the material of Kot Dijian phase, which were further dated based on radiocarbon analysis by Thomas, Kenneth and Allchin (1986). Furthermore, another lower palaeolithic site at Riwat was documented by Rendell, Dennell and Halim (1989). In continuation to this, during 1992 Nammal Lake Cave dated to Kot Diji Phase was explored by Salim. Alongside this, a small site of Kot Diji Phase site at Kuku Wala Ther in the North of Salt Rang was explored by Saifur Rahman Dar in 2002. In 2003 another site at Nāri was published by Dar located in the South of Salt Ranges.

This site in District Khoshab was visited by Dar (2003), as he was informed and guided by Mr. Hayat. In this regards, on preliminarily grounds the site at Nāri was documented, identified as Pre-Harappan site, and studied from surface data. However, this preliminary study was not completely elaborating the site as it was not measured and properly mapped, pottery types were not properly drawn as per the availability of resources. The new findings from the site were in need of their academic publication. Anyhow, the excavation based investigations are yet to be made.
This project is funded by Higher Education Commission (HEC), under Start-Up Research Grant Project and the activity is primarily conducted by Karakoram Centre for Cultural Studies and Heritage, Karakoram International University, Gilgit. This is further supported by Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations (QAU), and Hayat Museum of Archaeology and Natural History, Khoshab. The proposed objectives of this investigation were not completely achieved, due to financial limitations and legal constraints in conducting excavation on the site. Therefore, in order to eradicate the confusion between title and subject matter word “excavation” from the title of proposal has been replaced with “exploration” in the subheading of this report, and thus the objectives of research have also been moulded here, according to the limitations in the field, and thus this research seeks: First, to understand the cultural gap between Neolithic cultures and mature stages of the Indus Valley Civilisation in Northern part of Punjab Province. Second, to get a clear view of the cultural profile of Bronze Age in Northern Punjab, by conducting an exploration based investigation at the archaeological sites like that at Nārī. Third to understand the archaeological significance of this sites in the area for future archaeological investigations.

3. Academic significance of this study
The origin of Indus Valley Civilization has been established on the results mainly revealed by the sites in Balochistan, particularly that from Mehergarh. However, the connection of Prehistoric sites in Northern Punjab (Soan Valley) with that of Indus Valley is an academic problem. In this regard, previously, several Kot Dijiyan period sites have been explored along the Salt range, in the vicinity of this District. Thus, this research aims to understand the cultural link between the Neolithic Period and cultural development to the age of Kot Dijiyan period in the Salt ranges, and the emergence of Indus Valley Civilisation along the tributaries of mighty River Indus, through exploration at District Khoshab in northern part of Punjab Province. For now, this investigation has revealed positive results, and indeed which were expected before conducting this activity: It resulted a better understanding about the significance of archaeological sites in the area in this District, besides Nārī. It helped in developing a hypothetical understanding about the dotting link between Prehistory and Proto-history of Pakistan in Northern Punjab. It revealed preliminary structure of archaeological profile of this region. More significantly, it supported us in planning the future research activities in the area, which will play a key role in the extending research activities in the Khoshab District.

4. Archaeological exploration and adopted methodology
Here on the sites developed in antiquity around the spring water, Karakoram Centre for Cultural Studies and Heritage, KIU, conducted a field work in Khushab, Punjab in 2017. In this activity Principal Investigator conducted a field activity in the area, supported by MPhil/PhD Scholar from Taxila Institute of Asian Civilization and explored the sites of archaeological and historical significance. It includes the proper documentation of archaeological sites at Nārī dated to early phases of Indus Valley Civilization (3500 BC to 1500 BC), Rorapindh tentatively dated contemporary to Gandharan Civilization (3rd c. BC
to 5th c. AD) and Temple of Hindu Shahi (8th to 11th c. AD) at Kaṭṭha Sagral. This research was not completely directed as it was proposed, as mentioned above. However, in two phases the investigation was conducted. In the first phase, the research team conducted a preliminary survey of the site at Nāṛi, and analyse the archaeological remains gathered as surface collection. After preliminary field activity, analysis of data was made in office by documenting and comparing the features of antiquities with those explored from different sites in South Asia and Central Asia. In the second phase of field activity, the site was measured and mapped, in order to arrange it with reference to grid system. In this activity, the tools like GPS, Professional Camera, compass, required ranging rods, archaeologically designed picks, shovels etc. The sites were approached with the support of local Guide, as Mr. Hayat was everywhere with the team. The sites were measured through proper equipment. The coordinates of the site have been collected through GPS. Every artefact recovered from the site as surface collection were placed in particular bags with proper documentation by removing safely from the precise location and shifted to collection bags marking the area on the mound. The analytical study of surface data is still in progress.

5. Explorations on the water source of Kaṭṭha

The location of archaeological site, geographically on N 32° 26’49”E 72° 25’ 2”, at Nāṛi itself reveals the reason behind the selection of this site by the man of early Indus age for his residential establishment. It is due to the availability sweet water here in the fertile area, flowing down from salt ranges in a ravine. Therefore, the name of village “Nāṛi” appearing to be called, which means a small waterfall in Hindko and Gojiri languages of our time; whereas, the word “Nara” in the same languages means “a larger waterfall”.

This site is now used as graveyard by the villagers, is situated to the south of this village. A jeep-able track connects this site to the village, on western side of the mound. From remaining three sides, the circular mound in plan is surrounded by cultivated fields. On the western front there is a water pond and janaza-gah is there, and access to the mound is from the western side.

The mound has three elevated portions. The northern elevation can be called as “Area A”, eastern as “Area B” and southern as “Area C”. The maximum height of Area A is four (4) meters, Area B is six (6) meters and Area C is (5) meters from the ground level. Nearly half of the area on the mound is covered by Area A, whereas, Area B and C both collectively hold more the half of area on the site. The total area of the site is around fifty two thousand (52000) square meters thus the total area is 102 kanal or 13 acars. The water pond towards the east is more than three (3) meters deep and Janaza-gah is constructed on elevation of two meters from zero level.

The surface collection mainly includes pottery, expressing the typology of rims, necks, bases and decorative designs on body sherds assimilates the site to similar findings from the sites of Indus Valley Civilization but with unique features of its own. Collected terracotta cakes represent their variety. Seals and beads collected by the team of Hayat Museum of Archaeology and Natural History are also included as part of this study.
A sample of stone tool has been collected from the site during this activity. Such tools are recovered from such sites related to Indus period.

From this site, Mr. Hayat collected one impressions of seals on terracotta. The seal of Unicorn Bull to right, executed on terracotta, stand in front of bull and Indus Script is executed at the top. This seal impression on terracotta appearing to be made by embossing the impression of unknown original seal, and deepening of features are made by incorporation of editions. The editing is noticeable in the area of head, including horn, neck, ear, eye, mouth, stand in front, legs, hanging penis between the legs, tail, and inscription at the top. This editing is increasing the impression and appearance of impression on terracotta. The artist kept uniformity in over work by using same tool. Where ever he felt necessary to make the area wide he used the same tool again repeatedly. Normally such seals of unicorn bull, with hump, have the horns emerge from the back of skull and curves above the head (Kenoyer 2013: 111) with upward standing ear at the back. A slanting line making the triangular impression representing ear and extends up over the head in slanting pattern as common to all such illustrations. Therefore, this impression of seal on terracotta is indeed representing a different type of image depiction of one horn ox found on the seals normally of soap stone.

The surface collection from this site mainly includes pottery. The pottery varies in colour, texture, and material; also rims, bases, and sherds bearing variety in designs. This variation clearly links this site to similar evidences from the valley of Indus and marks this site to be related to Indus Valley Civilization. It not only relates this work of art to the early phases of Kot-Digi but also to the mature periods of this civilization continuing to the later phases of localization era.

Broken bangles of terracotta have been found scattered over the surface. All varies in their sizes. Maximum size of bangles, which can be worn by the adult female of ancient Nāri and youngster girls can have smaller in radius bangles.

Terracotta cakes of three type have been found from this site. First, triangular, second rounded and third rectangular beside terracotta rounded balls. Two terracotta balls were recovered from the site. From area A, a larger size of ball with oblong shape is appearing to be weight standard from the site. Another from the surface of area B another spherical shaped ball of terracotta is found.

Towards the western side of area A there is section exposed by the activities like digging for the graves. Above the surface cultural material is scattered due to construction of graves over the site. However, the ashy layer in the section attracted our attention. In order to better understand the details, our team exposed the section. Here we noticed five layers. Topmost thin strata of 7-10 cm, varying in thickness, is comprised mostly of garish colour (Munsell HUE: 10 YR-2/7) soil, is appearing to be a wind-blown loose material cover on the site. There is no evidence of cultural material in this stratum. Underneath, 15-25 cm thick layer of soil, comprised of multi-colour composition of soil but mostly it reddish brown colour (HUE 2.5- 4/5). In this layer, it is mostly soil with composition of small gravels. Here again cultural material is missing. Below second stratum there is thick layer of ash material and charcoal can be found from this period. Gravels are deposited mostly in this phase. Fourth one below is deposit of fertile soil, which occasionally provides broken
Sherds of pottery. The colour is light brownish. Fifth layer of same features continue underneath. Potsherds are revealed by this layer also.

Name of Kaṭṭha Sagral is associated with two names, first Kaṭṭha means spring and Sagral is the name of a saint buried near the temple here. This temple is located towards the North of cross road in this village on Sargodha Road. This temple is architecturally linked with the remaining examples of Hindu Shahi Period. The square architectural plan of existing structure is marking the areas garbagriha but the remaining parts of temple including antrala and mandapa are now no more existing, current status of preservation is not satisfactory, and replaced by modern sacred structures associated with the mosque on the mound. The construction of mosque marks the continuity of religious significance of the site in the local belief system. This mosque is constructed towards the North of Temple; towards the East ablution area of mosque is located; towards the West, connected to the temple, there is the shrine of Saint Sagral; and there is open area providing access to the temple and shrine is towards the South.

The temple was constructed over a mound of cultural deposit but the stratum marking its foundation level is yet to be known through excavation based investigation. The podium is visible to the West and South, of the square plan of structure of 3 meters on each side. The stone for construction is typically kanjur, and uniformly used. Above Plinth, on the southern intact façade, there are five panels in projecting plan towards the centre. Each panel is separated by projecting corner pilaster topped by ionic capital. The central projected panel is adorned with niche in centre. Transitional phase of varandika towards Shikara is identified by two panel of rafter impressions and the area between is decorated with the relief impressions of sun flower. The decoration over the shikara is no more intact, however, south-eastern corner above varandika is made with circular plan lotus impression, as it is common in Buddhist period pedestals (Hakal and Siddiqui 2018).

This site is approachable from Kaṭṭha Sagral through the metal road leading to village Rorapindh. A jeepable track between the fields connects the site to the mentioned. Here, in this area a mound with thick cultural deposit represents the remains of historic period. This site can be tentatively dated Buddhist Period and pottery from surface is assimilated to the mentioned period.

6. Conclusions
The detailed study of surface data from all three sites is in progress. However, tentatively it is concluded that all the three sites are looking to be utilising the same water source, and continues. The utilisation of this water started during the regionalisation era of Indus Valley Civilization leading further to the integration and localisation phases. The use of this water not stops here with the decline of Indus Civilisation, but used after a gap or without gap (?) by the people early historical period, marked by the site of Rorapindh emerged and existed beside Gandharan sites of Classical period. This indeed continued by the establishers of Kaṭṭha Sagral during the rule of Hindu Shahies. However, there is a possibility of gap after Hindu Shahies and the emergence of Islam. However, future studies based on excavations can resolve these academic issues of gaps after the decline Indus Valley Civilisation and the Classical Period.
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Fig. 1: Location map of pre/proto-historic sites in the Northern Punjab, Pakistan.

Fig. 2: Archaeological sites studied during field activity in the area.
Fig. 3: Mound measurement in progress.

Fig. 4: Stratigraphy the uppermost layers of mound at Nāri.
Fig. 5: Topography (a) and section (b) of archaeological mound at Nāri.
Fig. 6: Elevation of Kaṭṭha Temple.

Fig. 7: Rorapindh—Documentation in Progress.