
A Survey of Burial Practices in the Late/Post-Urban Harappan Phase during the Second and First Millennium BCE

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Received: 03 September 2015; Accepted: 26 September 2015; Revised: 14 October 2015
Heritage: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Archaeology 3 (2015): 54-83

Abstract: *The Harappan civilization flourished during 2600 – 1900 BCE and among the several traits it is known for, burial practices one among them. A long tradition of burying the dead can be witnessed during the preceding phases of Harappan civilization, which could have contributed to a larger extent in the overall architecture and arrangement of burial furniture of Harappan phase. The patterns in which the burials were built indicate different socio-cultural belief systems in place quite distinct indifferent regions. A survey of the burial practices during the late/post-urban Harappan phase indicates not only re-emergence of certain traits in the form of urn burials/post-cremation burials, but also continuation of Harappan forms also. This paper is aimed to look into the evidence available so far from late / post-urban Harappan sites, a few examples from Iron Age context also, datable to second and first millennium BCE, to understand the pattern and regional distributions, if any.*

Keywords: Burial Practices, Pot Burials, Earth Burials, Chalcolithic, Harappan Civilization, Cemetery H, PGW Culture

Introduction

The disposal of dead and emergence of various burial customs in the south Asian context can be traced back to the Mesolithic period. It has been generally agreed that burials to intern the dead individuals was one among the several modes of disposal of dead during prehistoric and protohistoric times. A survey on the disposal of dead by the present author (Prabhakar 2012) indicates the beginning since prehistoric times, evidence of which is available from eleven sites. More evidence starts to emerge in the archaeological record from Neolithic period onwards, from sites like Mehrgarh in Pakistan.

The urban phase of Harappan civilization also saw a consolidation in patterns of burying the dead and set patterns in the overall arrangement of body inside a pit, placement of burial goods. In addition to this, variations among the different domains of Harappan civilization can also be noticed (Prabhakar 2012) based on the

archaeological evidences unearthed so far. The placing of body in a foetal position is the hallmark of Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods in Balochistan along with other types like fractional, multiple and secondary burials (Prabhakar 2012).

The early Harappan phase in Gujarat region is marked by the presence of pot burials along with extended ones. It is also interesting to note a clear departure in the general arrangement of body remains and burial goods from the formative stages to the urban phase of Harappan civilization (Prabhakar 2012). The evidence of burials from eighteen Harappan sites of urban phase has been found so far and this indicates at least three prominent clusters, viz., 1) Baluchistan & Sindh; 2) Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh and 3) Gujarat (Prabhakar 2012). The Baluchistan and Sindh region sites indicate a predominant practice of post-cremation urns; the Gujarat sites represent multiple varieties with the Kachchh area displaying more diversification than the solitary example of Lothal. The sites falling in Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh present a different picture altogether, consisting mostly of extended inhumation burials, while the sites of Harappa and Kalibangan showing multiple burial practices. Post-cremation urn burials, predominant in the Baluchistan area are also found at Harappa, while pot / urn burials are found at Kalibangan. The general typology of the post-cremation urns consists of interment of with or without charred human bones along with ashes, charcoal, animal bones, pottery and artefacts inside a large urn.

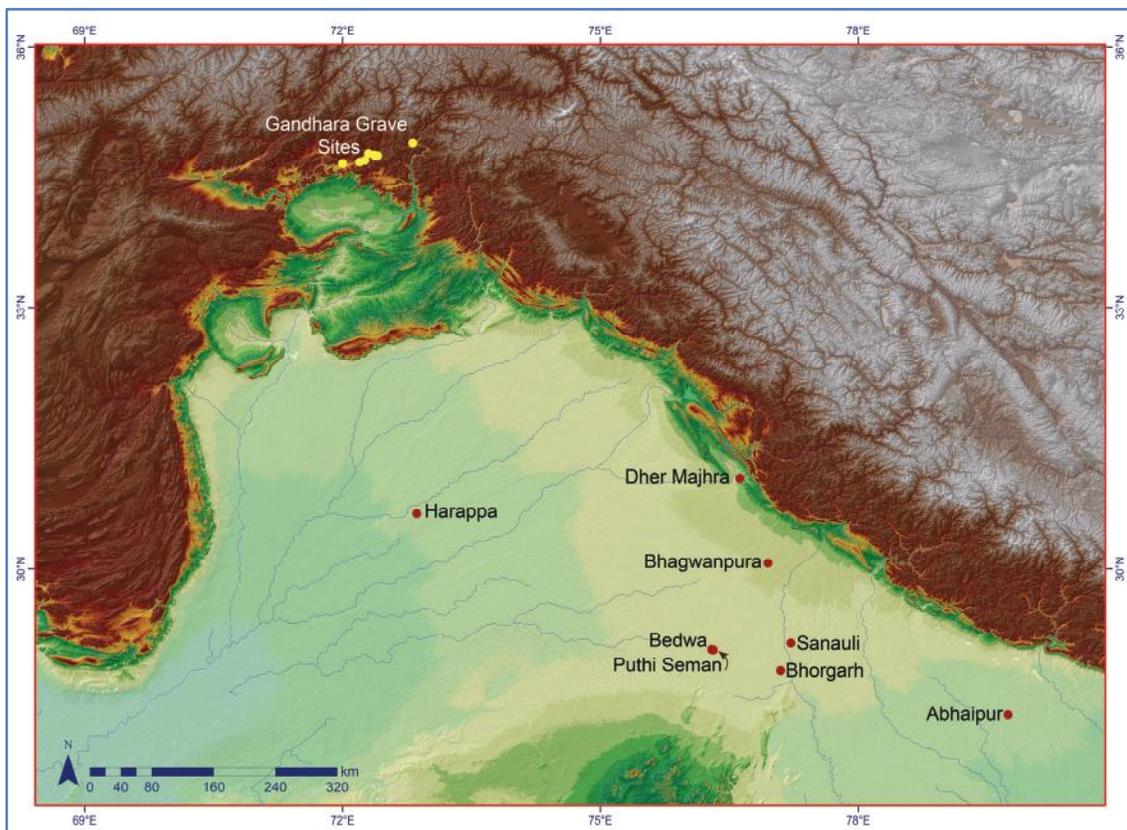


Figure 1: Location of Late / Post-urban Harappan phase with burial remains

The evidence for burials from late / post-urban phase of Harappan civilization has been noticed from eight sites, one each from Painted Grey Ware culture and a host of sites termed under 'Gandhara Grave culture'(Fig. 1). The evidence from post-urban sites like Bhagwanpura, Puthi Seman, Bedwa, Abhaipur indicate an extended inhumation type of burials, while at Dher Majra, post-cremation urn types are also reported along with the former ones. The Swat Valley sites present a totally different picture on the burial practices starting from second millennium BCE.

These burials exhibit a variety of burials like flexed inhumations and post-cremation interments in cist type, urn, box urns burials. The position of the skeletal remains is in utero and the practice of post-cremation urns again is an indicator of continuity, which is also noticed during the late Harappan phase from Harappa. The similarity and continuity is striking even though the new forms of burial architecture are introduced during this period.

Survey of Burial Practices in Late/Post-Urban Harappan Phase

A brief survey of the sites having evidence for burial of dead during late/post-urban phase of Harappan civilization will present a better understanding.

Harappa

Harappa (30° 37' 31.30" N; 72° 51' 52.22" E), district Sahiwal (formerly Montgomery) in Pakistan is the first site of the Indus Civilization (now Harappan Civilization) to be excavated in 1920-21, which was followed by Mohenjo-daro. The ancient site at Harappa was excavated on several occasions, some sporadic diggings in 1853 and 1856 by Alexander Cunningham, from 1920-21 to 1933-34 by Daya Ram Sahnii, M.S. Vats and others, in 1937 by K.N. Sastri, in 1946 by R.E.M. Wheeler, 1968 by R. Mughal, from 1987 to 2001 by Harappa Archaeological Research Project by Richard Meadow and Mark Kenoyer.

The principal divisions of the archaeological mounds at Harappa have been christened by Alexander Cunningham, which is still followed. The site was extensively damaged due to brick robbing right from the period of Cunningham's visit, who has recorded with despair the extensive use of bricks removed from the site to be re-used as brick ballast for nearly 100 miles (160.9 km) of Lahore – Multan railway line.

The Cemetery H mound is located to the south of Mounds E and D (Fig. 2). The remains of burial pots in the Cemetery H area were discovered due to the sloped nature of terrain in this area when compared to the surrounding mounds. The terrain is also slightly elevated wherein the local museum is located south-southeast and the remains were exposed due to gushing of water on this area after a heavy rain (Vats 1974: 203).

The area was systematically probed during the 1928-29, 1929-30 and 1930-31 field seasons. The burials at Cemetery H are in two strata, viz., Stratum I and II, the

latter being the earliest containing earth burials while the former consist of pot burials (Fig. 3). The earth burials consist of burial furniture in the form of water-pots, bowls, offerings dishes or plates, saucers, flat covers, flasks, round vases, etc (Vats 1974: 203).

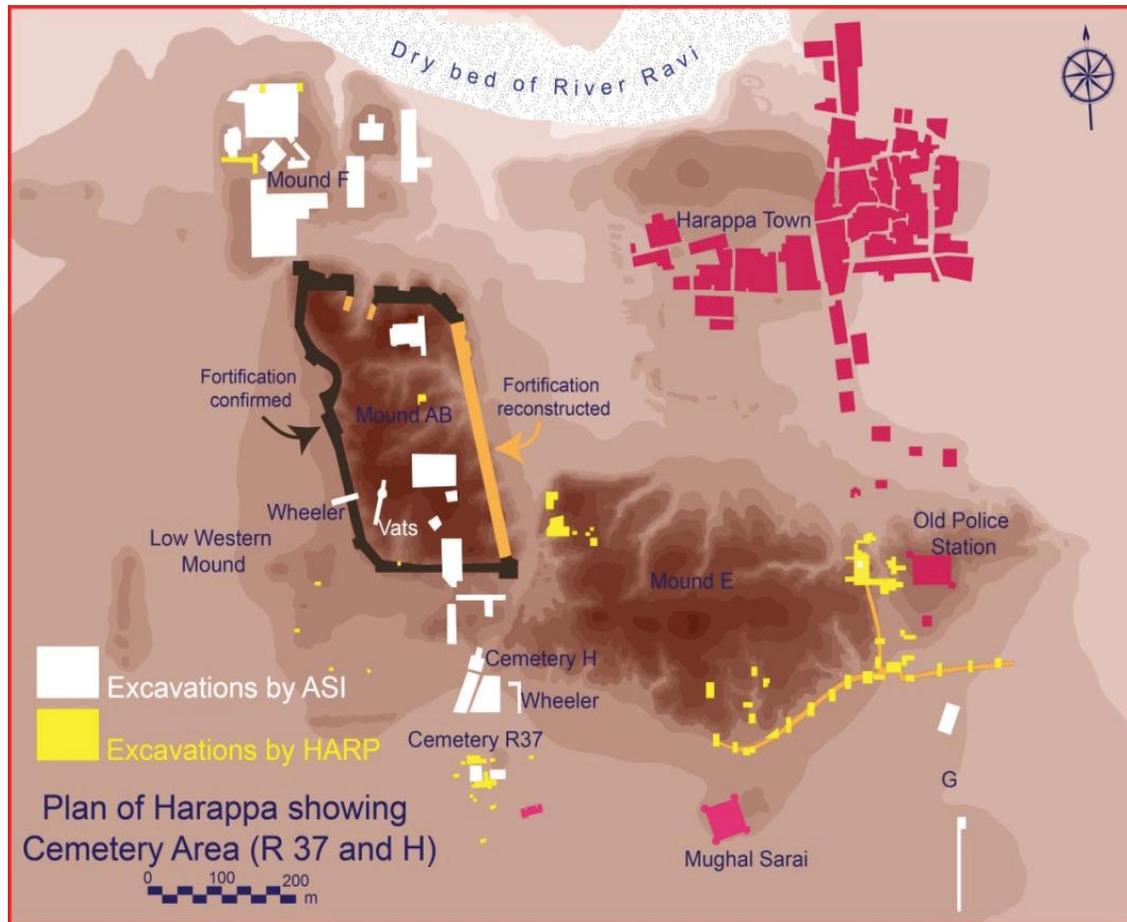


Figure 2: Plan of Harappa showing Cemetery Area (R 37 and H)

It is also pointed out that the Cemetery H area was used as dumping ground before its use as a cemetery based on the large occurrence of Indus type pottery of all kinds and fabric; the pointed based goblets exceeding in number of all. This area also contained a good collection of minor artefacts, which might have been deposited as discarded material along with the pottery remains (Vats 1974: 228-229).

Pot Burials from Stratum I

Vats reports that up to 1928-29, 11 pot-burials were excavated and later 124 more burials were brought to light (Vats 1974: 217). Among the pot-burials unearthed at Harappa, "... 35 contained bones of adults – young or old, 21 of children, 6 whose age is doubtful, and 11 of babies or infants, while 51 were without bones and filled only with percolated earth" (Vats 1974: 217). The evidence from the burials suggest that only one pot was meant for interring the bones, even though exceptions are always found, in which a single pot contained three skulls. Some of the pot-burials also exhibited mixing of bones of one or more individuals.

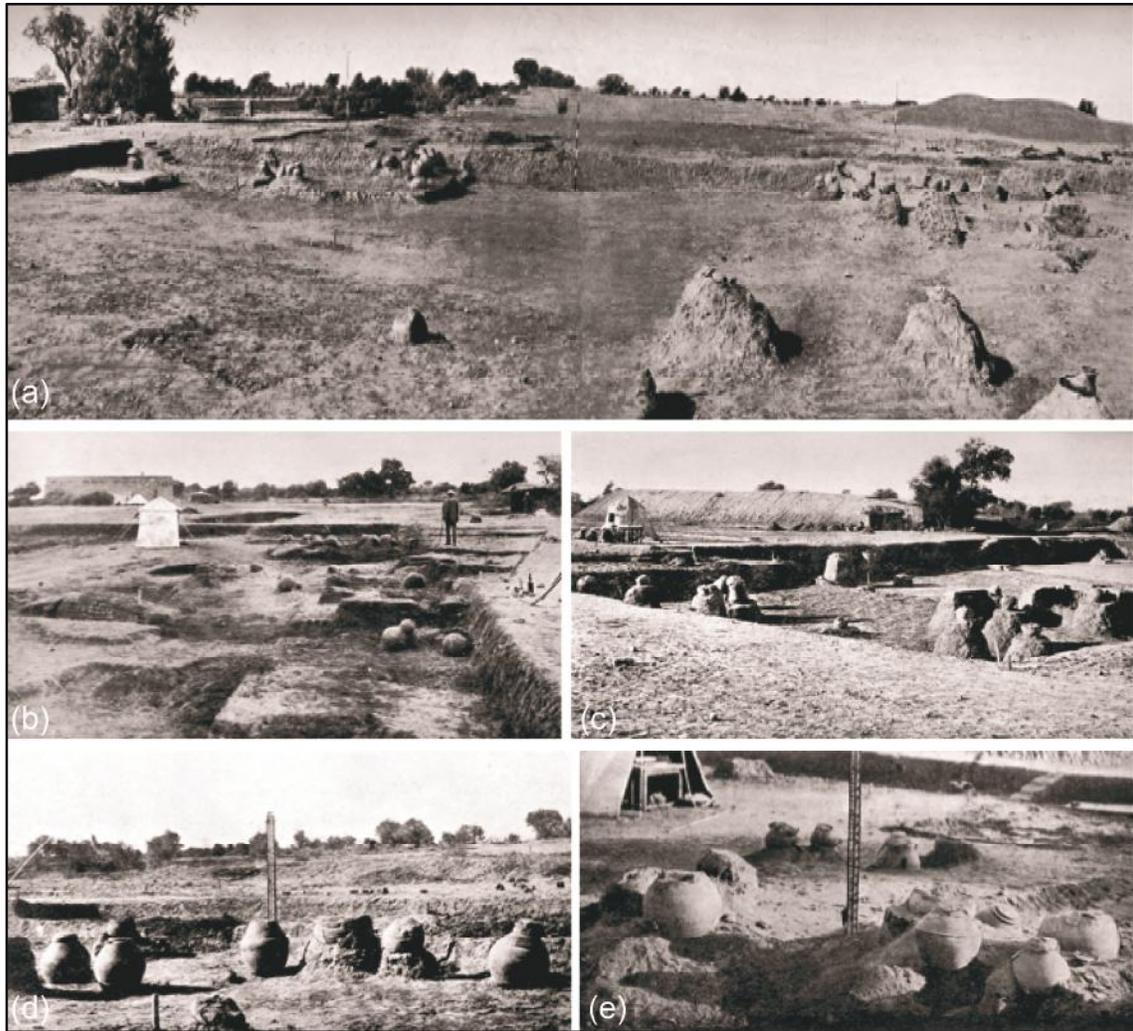


Figure 3: General view of Cemetery H site and pot burials, Harappa

Vats, who mention that normally the skull is placed at the bottom centre of the jar, and longer bones surrounding it placed either slanting or in horizontal position, bisecting each other in several cases and the remaining spaces filled with other smaller bones wherever possible, also discuss the placement of bones inside the pots (Vats 1974: 218). The average height of placement of bone remains inside the pot is from 12.7 – 25.4 cm above the bottom, and in one case, the height noticed is 44.45 cm.

Instances of charred and uncharred bones mixed with pieces of charcoal, blackened potsherds along with other artefacts in a jar (H 245 a) is also found which is compared with some post-cremation urns from the mounds of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro by Vats (1974: 215). The child burials (Fig. 4) were found with “...one ellipsoid, one oval and nine round jars...” and usually the younger babies are placed in embryonic position and without exposing them like the adult ones (Vats 1974: 219). Further, evidence of the babies tied up first in embryonic position and then wrapped in a cloth is also put forth as observed from H 83 and H 165 a (Vats 1974: 219). The pot-burials were found very close to the existing surface and hence the uppermost ones crushed heavily due to the

traffic. The most common shapes of the pots from the burials are round, ellipsoid and carinated with heights ranging from 25 – 60 cm (Vats 1974: 203). The round burial pots are both painted and plain, the painted ones have a flanged neck and sometimes with a ring base as in the case of ellipsoid vessels (Figs. 5-7) (Vats 1974: 203).



Figure 4: Pot-burials containing child burials, Cemetery H, Harappa

The plain vessels are also decorated below the shoulder portion in the form of roughening by fingertip/finger-groove patterns (Vats 1974: 203). The ellipsoid burial jars are both plain, decorated with simple painted bands and some of them elaborately painted while the pots with carination are elaborately painted (Vats 1974: 203). The burial pots were covered and closed with various utensils like inverted bowls, vases, handled lids, potsherds and bricks, and in some rare cases further covered by a sherd (Vats 1974: 203). The burial pots usually contain fragmentary human remains placed only at the lower part while the upper part remained empty and filled with post-burial earth (Vats 1974: 204). Vats notes that these burials are devoid of certain pottery types like goblets with pointed bases, cylindrical vases, figurines, cakes, etc., which is generally associated with post-cremation urns from the mounds (Vats 1974: 204). Vats further notes that the human remains interred in the burial pots are actually post-exposure remains from the dead bodies to birds and beasts based on the evidence of presence of a group of bones including two skulls, mandible and fragmentary bones in an enclosure from Mound AB (Vats 1974: 204). These burial pots are different from those found from the mounds in terms of shape and painted decorative motifs. Vats also observes that only the larger bones like skull and fragments, leg and arm bones,

parts of vertebrae, pelvis, shoulder bone and other longer bones were found in the pot-burials which also indicates that the smaller bones were scavenged and carried away by birds or beasts and hence with the leftover bones, the pot-burials were prepared (Vats 1974: 217). Some of the burial pots in terms of interment of grave furniture are discussed here in order to understand the customs and traditions.

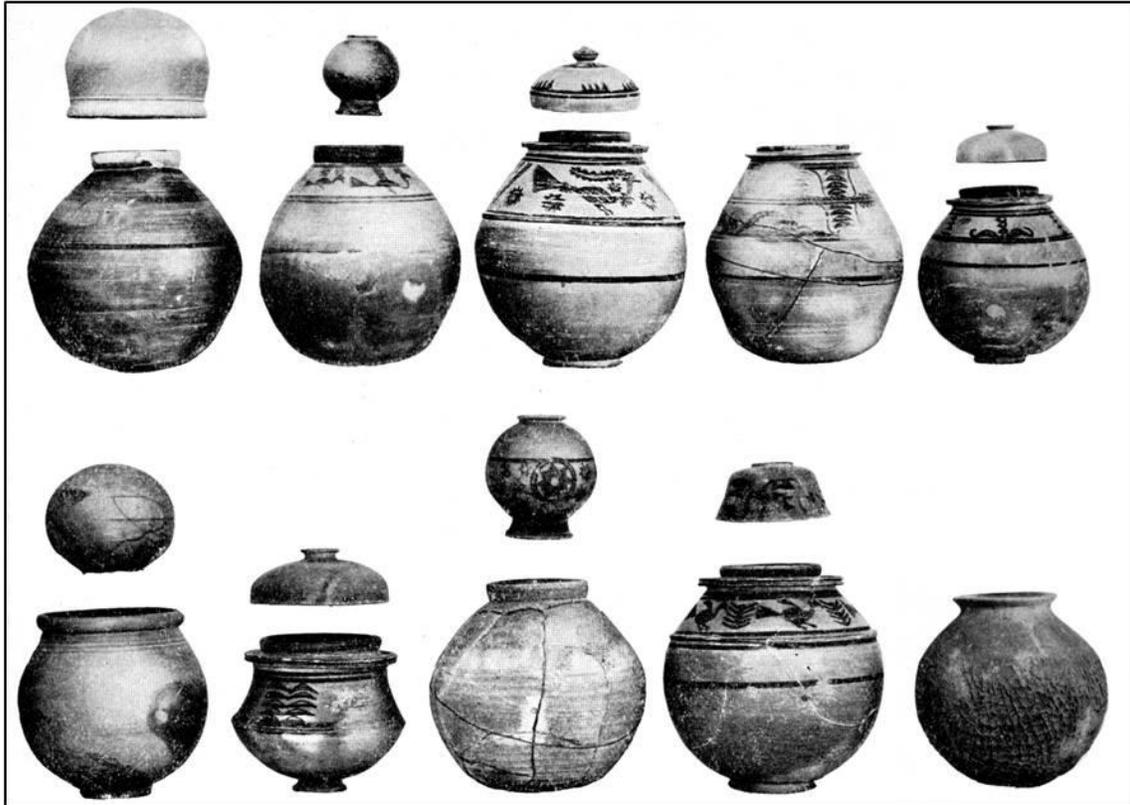


Figure 5: Pottery typology from pot-burials, Stratum I, Cemetery H, Harappa

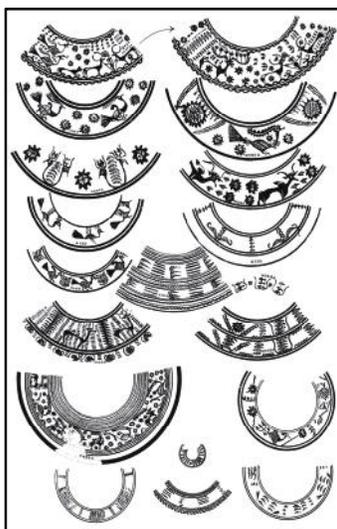


Figure 6: Paintings on burial pots, Cemetery H, Harappa

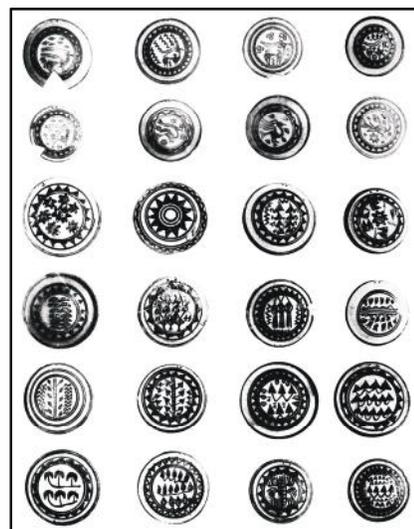
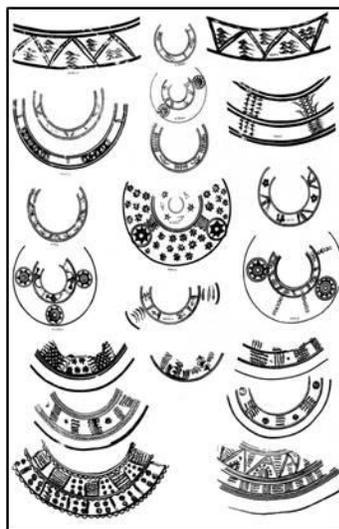


Figure 7: Paintings on flat covers, Cemetery H, Harappa

The "Mixed Group No. H 231" consist of a main group of five jars and three smaller sub-groups consisting of pottery types like bowl, saucers, flask or vases. Among these three smaller sub-groups, one fragmentary flat cover contained the remains of "forepart of *markhor* goat" and the pottery was painted underneath with fish motifs (Vats 1974: 206). The Group No. H 206 consists of a group of eleven vessels, four ellipsoid in shape covered with inverted bowls, four roundish with upper part missing, an oval vase and goblets. The interesting feature of this group is the painted decoration of one of the ellipsoid jars (named as *a*) at the shoulder portion depicting three flying peacocks alternating with stars (Vats 1974: 207). The jar *b* from H 206 has again painted motifs in two bands, the lower one containing rows of leaves alternated with pair of stars, while the upper one is identified as a mythological scene and consists of two groups of figures, "...a bull with long incurving horns on either side of a beaked human figure who has secured them by the neck with ropes held in hands and under the feet, and who also has a bow and arrow in his left hand (Vats 1974: 207)".

The left portion of the representation shows a hound attacking the rear animal and taking the tail in its mouth, which is followed again by the representation of two horned peacocks in flight (Vats 1974: 207). The scene again is repeated with a slight modification and the sequence is from left to right. In between the above two scenic representations, a large sized goat is shown with enormous sized horns ornamented with eight trident-like devices (Vats 1974: 207). The opposite side of the jar has a similar repetition of scenes with the exception that the bulls are decorated with trident shaped crest between the horns.

Vats interprets the scenic representation as a symbolic one associated with the death, wherein the left scene of hounds may be that of Yama while the right scene of bulls with trident crest represent 'Abode of Bliss' and the intermediary goat may be a 'pathfinder' which is deified here (Vats 1974: 208). The support for this interpretation is drawn from the ancient literature like *Rigveda*, *Asvalayana Ghrihya Sutra*, *Aitareya Brahmana*, *Katyayana Srauta Sutra*, and from later literature like *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Harivamsa* (Vats 1974: 208). The depiction of peacock on burial pots is also noticed from Jar H 150, Jar H 148 wherein a set of five conventionalised peacocks is depicted in the former while five flying peacocks alternating with rows of birds are depicted in the latter.

The other depictions from burial pots include that of long-horned and humped quadrupeds identified as bulls, birds and stars (Jar H 154) (Vats 1974: 210-211), rows of flying kites alternating with leafy patterns (Jar H 148) (Vats 1974: 211), peacocks along with other animals, conventionalised trees, bulls with bird like heads carrying spirit of the dead (Group 3934) (Vats 1974: 212), a flying peacock carrying spirit of dead (in therianthropic form) (Jar H 206 *a*) (Vats 1974: 212), bands of paintings divided into horizontal bands in two tiers and "...subdivided into a number of triangular panels decorated with rows of flying birds or fishes" (Jar H 620) (Vats 1974: 213), two tiers, upper one consisting of rows of birds (resembling arrow-heads) and double lozenges flanked

by leaves; lower one with alternating groups of varieties of birds (Jar H 623) (Vats 1974: 213), pair of peacock heads alternated with rayed orbs or stars, heads of peacocks crowned with pairs of sacred horns with twin leaves (Jar H 245) (Vats 1974: 214), two tiered decoration with *markhor* goat, trees and bird in upper while stars-in-crescent and birds in lower (Jar H 246) (Vats 1974: 214).

The designs executed on the burial pots (Fig. 5) other than the animals and birds consisting of stars, rayed orbs, wavy lines, vegetation, flying birds, etc., are interpreted with inner meanings by Vats. Vats associated stars and rayed orbs representing heaven and sun; wavy lines and fishes to water; flying birds to carry the soul of dead person (Vats 1974: 216-217).” The lids of the burial pots are also decorated in a variety of motifs like bands, rough triangles, wavy lines, *pipal* leaf, orbed rays, etc. The personal belongings like clay ball; flat & feather-like ornament of ivory with linear decoration are also found as in the case of Group 3934 (Vats 1974: 211). In another burial (Jar H 231 b), the personal belongings consist of two cog-wheel shaped nose discs of steatite was found and from burial Jar H 149 artefacts like terracotta cakes, pointed base goblet of Indus type, a dish, terracotta ball, pieces of a bangle and pestle also found (Vats 1974: 219). The orientation of the pot-burial is mentioned only in the case of H 246 wherein within a group consisting of 9 jars, 4 lay roughly in a north – south direction.

Earth Burials from Stratum II

The Stratum II, the lower levels at Cemetery H revealed evidence totally different from the pot-burials of Stratum I. This stratum consists of human burials, extended in nature, both complete and fractional, and interred into graves dug into the ground (Figs. 8 & 9). These burials also contain burial furniture, which is different in nature and typology from that of pot-burials. The evidence gathered from the earth burials indicates that the orientation in majority of the cases is from northeast – southwest, while in three instances it is east – west and in one case, west to east (Vats 1974: 226). In most of the burials, the dead are placed in an extended supine position, while in five instances the legs are flexed inwards.

The burials also generally contain grave furniture in the form of pottery (Fig. 10), and in the case of five extended ones and in four incomplete burials, no burial pottery was found. The burial pottery is finished with a red polish over the surface and decorated with black colour paintings (Fig. 11). The nature of burial pottery associated with the burials is water-pot, a small round *ghara* (pot), round pot, squat vase, bowl, flask, food plates or dishes, flat covers. The order of frequency among the pottery from maximum to fewer in order is water pot, bowl with or without a flask inside, food plates or dishes with or without a stand (Vats 1974: 227). The pottery, which occurs in fewer frequencies, is the flasks, saucers and flat covers. The lesser frequency pottery also occurs separately in the burials and if not associated with other major pottery types, they are found usually in large numbers (Vats 1974: 227).

The pots that are generally larger than the water pots are termed as *kalasas* by Vats and

these types of vessels are found with gypsum crystals at the bottom, which is interpreted as due to the presence of water inside. The *kalasa* is also covered with a small flask, which is said to have been with a utility purpose of drinking water for the deceased (Vats 1974: 227). The burials, which are rich in terms of pottery, are H 502, H 502, H 697, H 698 and their general arrangement consist of placing near the head, the body, and foot, with the most common preference is the first one. The category of pottery described (Vats 1974: 227) as offering dishes “...are squat, strong and well made, with raised horizontal mouldings on the base.” The bowls are plain, while the saucers are deep and decorated with chevrons and with holes at the rim. The saucers are painted on the underside with various motifs like “...deer, peacocks, trees, leaves, stars, birds, fishes, hands, tassels, etc.” Vats also notes that the profusion in the decoration is noted in the upper levels of the stratum (Vats 1974: 228). The flasks from the burials have both well-defined base as well as roundish base without no projection and decorated with “...simple designs consisting of lines and chevrons, stars in circles or crescents, and with a dark slip over the neck; in others only the neck is painted (Vats 1974: 228)”.

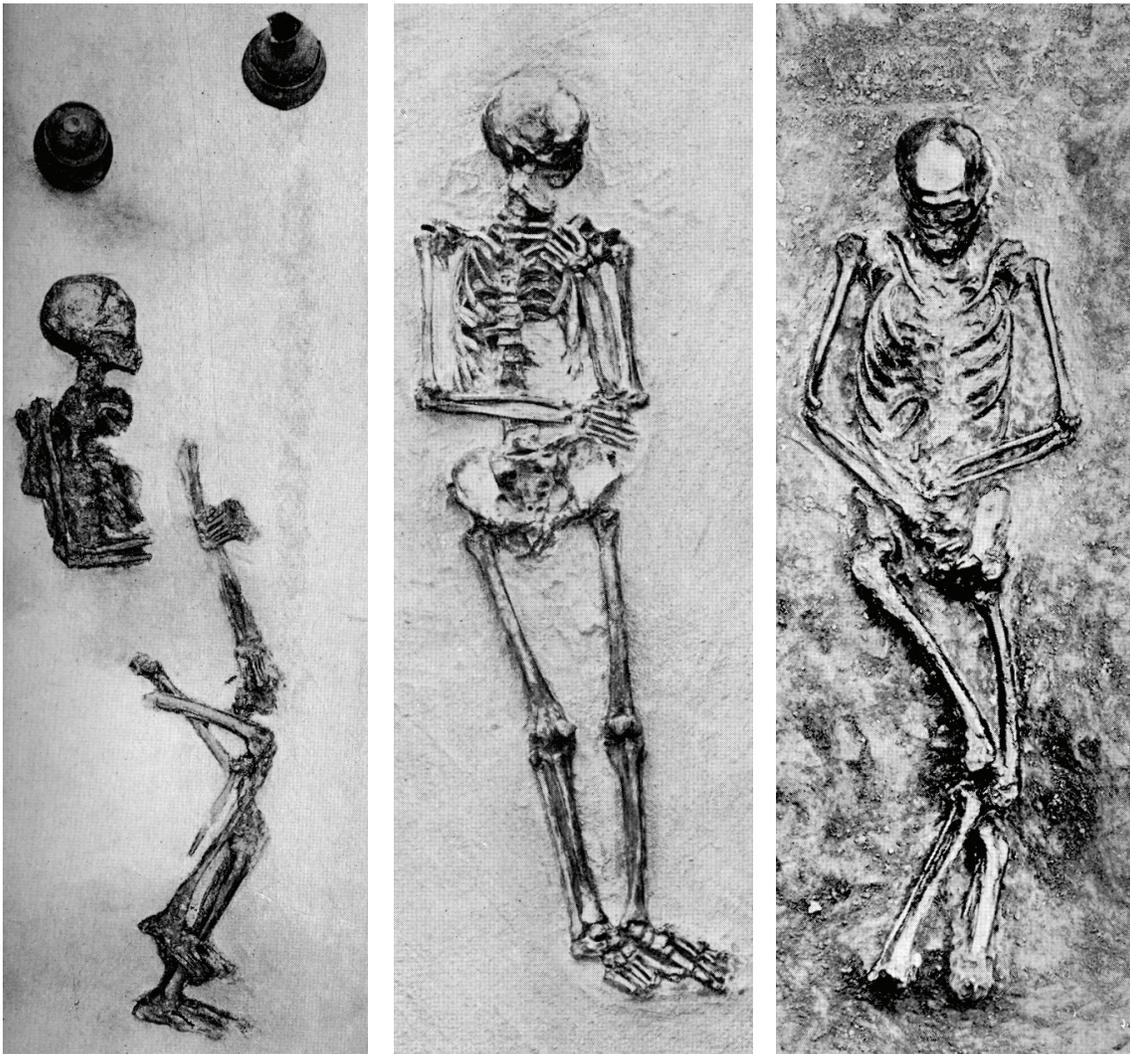


Figure 8: Burial H 696, H 710 and H 695, Cemetery H, Harappa

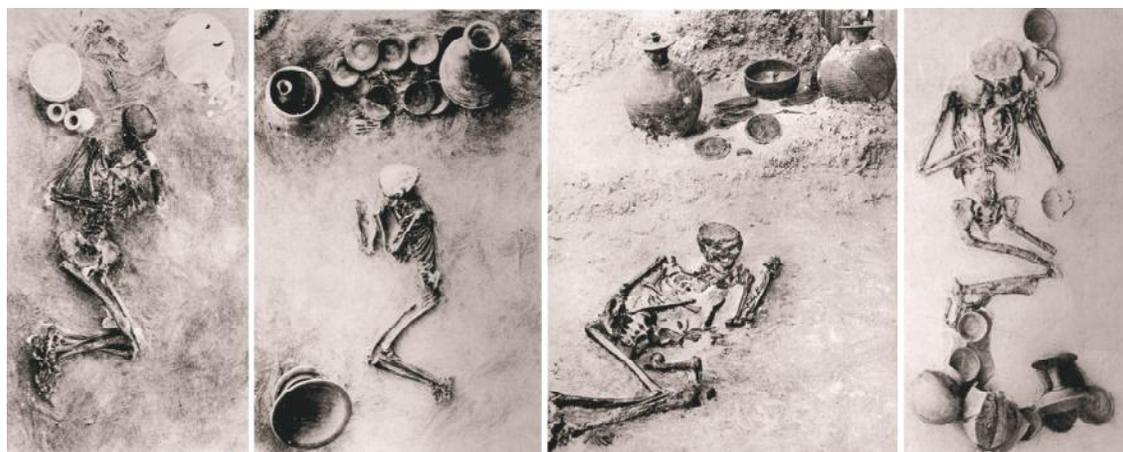


Figure 9: Burial H 484, 501, 502, 697, Cemetery H

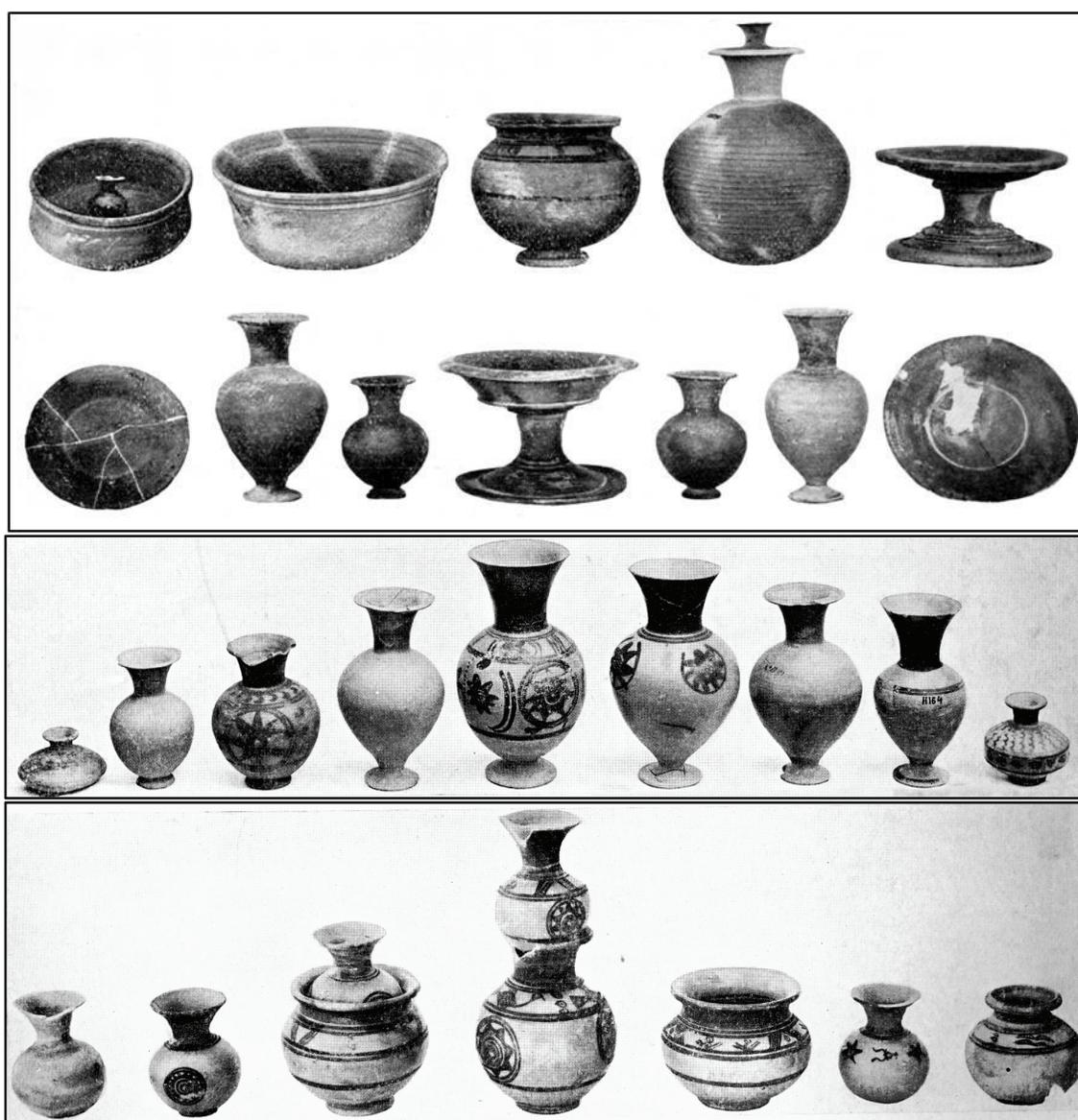


Figure 10: Pottery typology from pot-burials, Stratum II, Cemetery H, Harappa

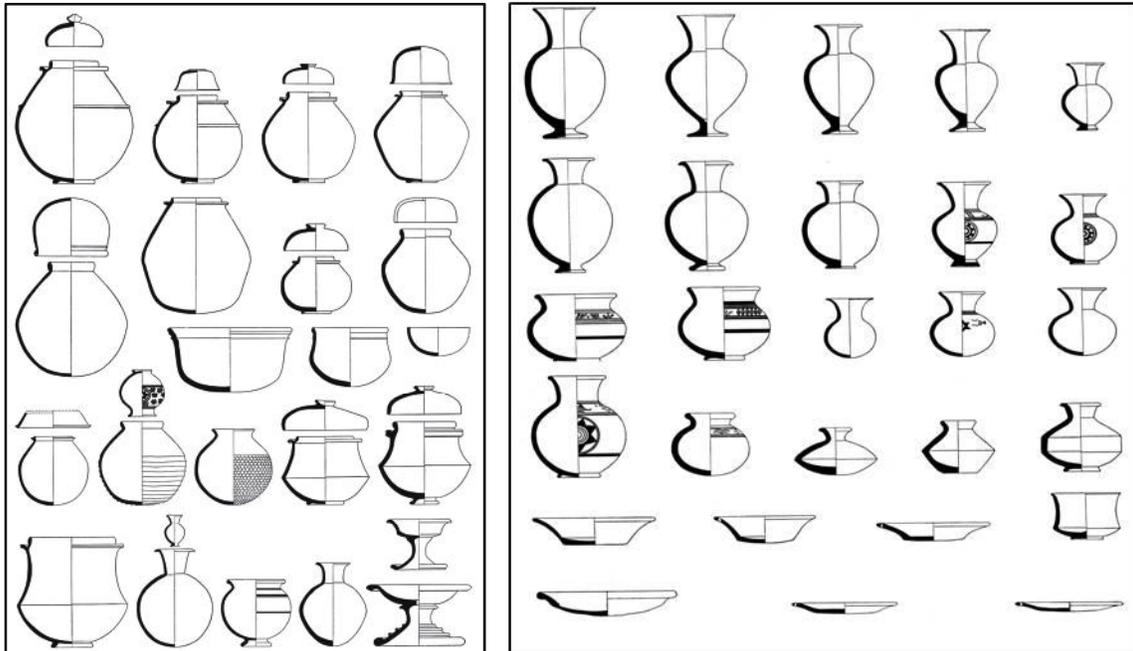


Figure 11: Typology of burial pottery from Cemetery H, Harappa

A brief of each of the earth burial is given in Table 1 (Vats 1974: 220-226) for understanding the placement of skeleton, burial pottery, posture etc.:

Table 1: List of Earth Burials from Cemetery H, Harappa

Burials	Particulars	Burial Goods
H 710	Adult female, oriented roughly east – west; extended, head turned towards left; left arm placed over the shoulder and right one placed between left arm and pelvis.	No burial furniture found
H 695	Adult male with well-developed bones, laid in supine in east – west orientation	Burial pottery placed in four sub-groups, some of them mixed with later pot-burial group.
H 698	Contained four earth burials, viz., H 698, H 696, H 697 and H 485; H 698 is an adult male, extended with west – east orientation, head turned toward left, hand crossing each other over the right of pelvis; left hand over right	Burial pottery found crowded near the feet, a medium-sized jar, two saucers, one flask, two large sized flasks, four small round vases. Bones of sheep / goat found to left of skeleton; some animal ribs placed in the hands.
H 696	Adult male, northeast – southwest orientation	Burial pottery near the head consisting of two water-pots, each closed with a flask; water pots decorated with rows of stylised leaves alternated with winged figure.

Burials	Particulars	Burial Goods
H 697	Adult male, lying in east – west orientation, in supine position, head turned towards left, left arm folded and kept on shoulder, right arm bent and placed near the chest; legs almost bent and drawn up with right placed over left.	Burial pottery consists of flat covers, saucers, wide cups, handled lids, broken cups, vase, a small <i>ghara</i> , food plate.
H 485	Young adult male in east – west orientation.	No burial pottery found
H 488	Adult female, northeast – southwest orientation; extended and better preserved; head turned to left, arms straight along the body.	Associated with this are animal bones, a <i>kalasa</i> closed with a flask.
H 636	Adult, northeast – southwest orientation, mixed up skeletal remains.	No burial pottery.
H 502	Adult male, northeast – southwest orientation, head turned towards left and legs flexed inwards	2 <i>kalasas</i> each closed with a flask; a plain bowl with a flask inside; one large flask, 2 saucers, five flat covers; fragmentary animal bones between the saucers
H 501	Young adult, lying to right with lefts flexed inwards; arms bent upwards and placed in front of face	A <i>kalasa</i> , bowl with flaks inside, 8 saucers and flat covers, an offering dish; stray animal bones between saucers and flat covers.
H 484	Adult male, northeast – southwest orientation; left hand placed over the chest and right over abdomen; legs drawn up.	A small, narrow-necked vase below the lower jar; 2 flasks and a bowl close to right shoulder; a <i>kalasa</i> closed with flask near the head; animal bones between the <i>kalasa</i> and the bowl.
H 88	Adult female, southeast – northwest orientation; extended, right hand over left forearm and legs folded up.	Bowl with a flask inside.
H 184	Adult male, east – west orientation; dismembered and portion of skeleton preserved	Group of pottery to east and south consisting 2 long-necked <i>kalasas</i> , 4 flasks, 1 bowl, 1 vase, 1 offerings dish, 8 flat covers each with pair of holes, 5 saucers; animal bones including vertebral column near the saucers.
H 307	Fractional burial of an adult male, southwest – northeast orientation	Stray animal bones to north and west; no pottery.
H 306	Adult male, northeast – southwest orientation; supine and head turned towards right; forearms crossed over abdomen	A bowl and a flask.

Bhorgarh

Bhorgarh (28°49' N; 77° 5' E) is a village, located some 30 km from the Old Delhi railway station and the ancient mound is 500 m west of the present village. The ancient mound measured 130 m east – west and 100 m north – south. However, the original mound spread over several acres of land, and was reduced to a small patch due to the consistent levelling activities of the villagers for agricultural purposes. River Yamuna once flowed nearby the ancient site, which is now nearly 10 km south of the present village. The excavation at this mound was carried out by the Department of Archaeology, Government of Delhi for two field seasons, viz., 1992-93 and 1993-94. The following cultural periods (Table 2) were identified at this site by the excavator (Babu 1995: 88-90) which spanned over 2500 years:

Table 2: Cultural Periods at Bhorgarh

Period	Culture	Chronology
Period I	Late Harappan	Second millennium BC.
Period II	Painted Grey Ware Culture	First millennium BC.
Period III	Kushan	Second and third centuries AD.
Period IV	Medieval	Sixteenth and seventeenth centuries A.D.

The **Period I** corresponds to Late Harappan period and is dated tentatively to the second millennium B.C. with the absence of any radiocarbon dates. The habitational remains of this period could not be traced and is only marked by the presence of two graves, named as Grave 1 and 2.



Figure 12: Grave 1 at Bhorgarh

Grave 1 (Fig. 12) is an extended burial, placed in an almost north – south orientation and in supine position (Babu 1995: 89). However, the photograph clearly shows the

orientation in respect to the two sections, which should have been northwest – southeast, recalling the evidences from Sanauli. The grave goods consisted of only three earthenware vessels of red ware, one a medium sized bowl and the rest two small vases of varying sizes. The skeleton measures 176 cm in length and both the hands were found folded from the elbow and seems to have been placed on shoulders (Babu 1995: 89). Grave 2 is also an extended burial but without any grave goods. This burial is also in the same orientation as above, i.e., northwest – southeast. The left hand of the skeleton was found placed parallel to the vertebral column (Babu 1995: 89).

Bhagwanpura

Bhagwanpura (30° 4' N; 76° 57' E) is located on the right bank of dry bed of River Saraswati (Fig. 13) and at a distance of 24 km northeast of Kurukshetra, which is the district headquarter. The habitational remains at Bhagwanpura which rises to a height of 2.4 m from the surrounding area was noticed at a distance of 350 m south of the village of same name (Jagatpati Joshi 1993: 9). The site was discovered by R.S. Bisht in 1974. The excavation at this site brought to light two cultural horizons, viz., Late Harappan and Painted Grey Ware cultures, with a maximum deposit of 3.2 m (Jagatpati Joshi 1993: 17). It has been attributed by the excavator that for the first time in an archaeological deposit, the interlocking of Late Harappan culture with Painted Grey Ware culture was brought to light from this site (Jagatpati Joshi 1993: 17).

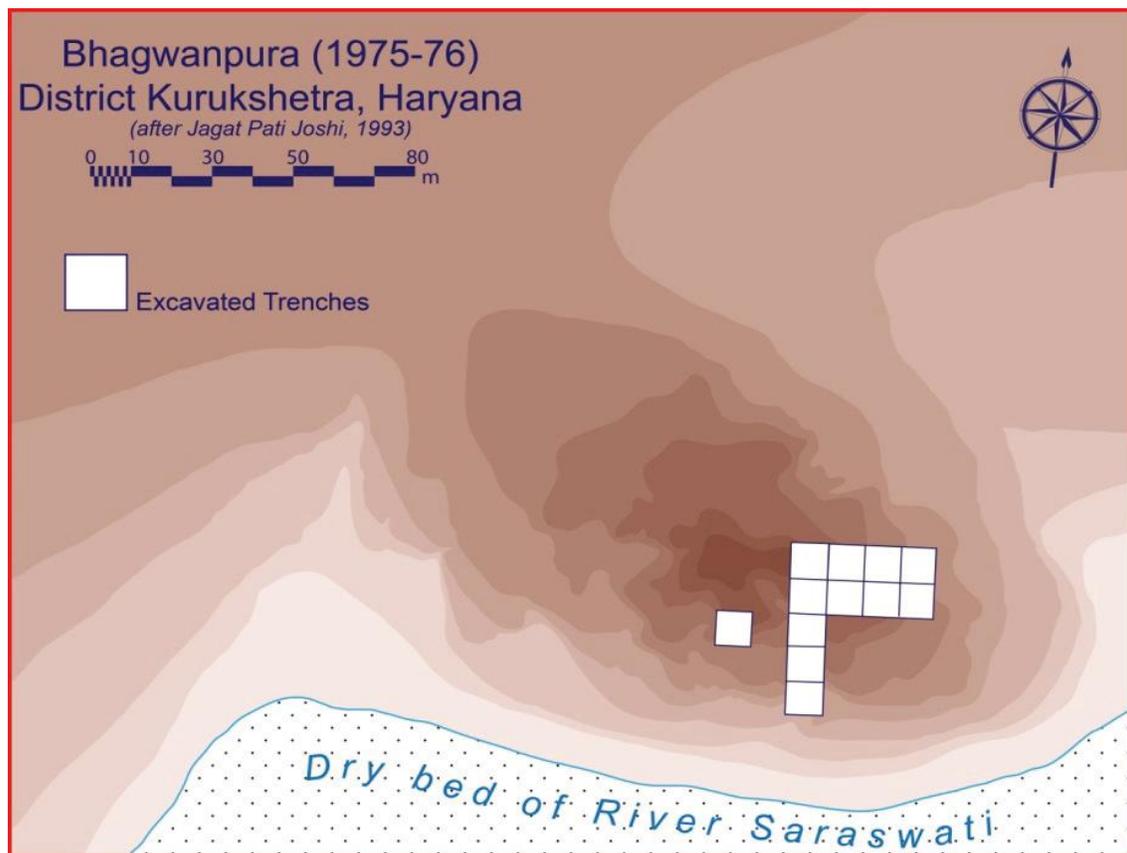


Figure 13: Site plan of Bhagwanpura

The two cultural horizons have been designated as Sub-Period IA (Late Harappan) and Sub-Period IB (PGW). The Late Harappan period is further classified into two phases which is characterised by raised mud platforms, one of which was excavated and measured 4.25 X10 m. The settlement was badly damaged after a deposit of about 70 – 80 cm, the evidence of which was clearly noticeable in most of the excavated area (Jagatpati Joshi 1993: 17). The pottery repertoire of this sub-period consist of (a) red ware of late Harappan type, (b) ochre colour ware from flood affected trenches, (c) red ware have affinities with Cemetery H type, (d) incised ware in several designs and patterns, (e) thick grey ware and (f) pottery of Bara type, both plain and incised (Jagatpati Joshi 1993: 17). The artefact finds include that of terracotta figurine of a bull, terracotta wheels, copper rods and pins, beads of faience, semi-precious stones and terracotta, etc.

Among the artefact finds, the most noteworthy is that of a carnelian humped bull (Jagatpati Joshi 1993: 18). The PGW deposit is found interlocked with the Late Harappan one and no breakage of habitation is noticed from the excavation. There is a small phase of interlocking between the two cultures at this site which is also marked by the huge flooding after which people belonging to both the traditions continued to live at the site continuously, even though the percentage of Late Harappan pottery started to decrease in comparison with PGW (Jagatpati Joshi 1993: 18). The excavation also brought to light three structural phases of sub-period IB, which also showed contract to the previous sub-period, wherein only wattle and daub structures, either round or semi-circular were used for habitation. The people of sub-period IB constructed mud walled houses, the most prominent one consist of 13 rooms with a corridor (Jagatpati Joshi 1993: 17).The last structural phase consists of houses built of baked bricks also. The artefact finds include those made of copper, faience (beads and bangles), terracotta (beads, figurines), and bone (styli). The pottery repertoire consisted of Painted Grey Ware, plain grey ware and late Harappan pottery.

Burial Remains from Bhagwanpura

The presence of two skeletons from the habitation remains of sub-period IB was also brought to light. The orientation of both the skeletons is in north – south direction with the face tilted in west direction. One of the skeletons belongs to an adult male (Fig. 14) of 35 years while the other is that of a female child (Fig. 15) (Jagatpati Joshi 1993: 19).The burials are devoid of any grave furniture and the excavator surmises that even though the orientation of the burials is according to the Harappan burial practice, a new feature of interring the dead very near to the habitation is noticeable here (Jagatpati Joshi 1993: 19).

The burials have been noticed from the sub-period IB of Bhagwanpura. However, no clear indication of these burials belonging to either one of the two cultural levels is given by the excavator. It is also pertinent to notice here that even though the PGW people arrived at the site, the Late Harappans continue to live along with them. This evidence clearly demonstrates that the burials could have belonged to the successors of

Late Harappan at the site, and the slight departure in traditions noticed might be attributed to the arrival of new customs and beliefs.



Figure 14: Burial of an adult male, Bhagwanpura



Figure 15: Burial of a female child, Bhagwanpura

Dher Majra

Dher Majra (31°02' N; 76°33' E) is located in district Rupnagar of Punjab and 11 km to the north of district headquarter Rupnagar. The site is located on the banks of a seasonal stream known as *Kanahan Nadi*. The latter joins River Satluj along with River Sirsa nearly 4.8 km west-northwest of Dher Majra. The extent of the site is roughly 91.44 X 106.7 m and rises to a height of roughly over 4 m from the surrounding plains even though the original height has been estimated to be much more than the present extant one (Prufer 1952: 3). The site was excavated by Olaf Prufer under the Jamia Millia Islamia Research Foundation in 1951.

The excavator identifies a small elevated mound to the southeast of main mound which is separated by a small depression as an ancient kiln (Prufer 1952: 3). The site was excavated by laying out four trenches namely A, B, C and D. Of the four trenches, Trenches B, C and D brought to light remains of two cultural phases, namely the Harappan Culture and another one of a later period (Prufer 1952: 4). The excavator notes the absence of any brick buildings at the site. Among the four trenches, Trench B brought to light six layers, of which layers 1 and 2 yielded painted pottery reported of non-Harappan type. The excavator reports that the layer 2 yielded "...evidence of burials, both ordinary and crematory" (Prufer 1952: 4). The layers 3 and 4 brought to light pottery of the typical Harappan types, while in layer 5 the percentage of pottery decreases and layer 6 is an artificial platform raised on river pebbles (Prufer 1952: 3-4).

The ceramic industry consists of the typical Harappan types and types similar to Cemetery H (Fig. 16). Of these, the excavator clearly identifies the appearance of pottery of Cemetery H type from layer 3 and its domination in upper two layers. The excavator also highlights the presence of painted and incised red ware along with pottery of Cemetery H type. Further, as the burials of 'ordinary and crematory' nature have been reported from layer 2, they can be placed to Late / Post-urban Harappan period. Among the artefact finds, the important ones are broken bronze bangle, copper toothpick, faience bangles of bluish, green and reddish colours; terracotta toy cart wheels, gamesmen, sling balls; bone stylus, a fragmentary terracotta figurines; crude variety of stone weights, of non-Harappan types, saddle querns, pestles, beads of agate, copper, jade (vesuvianite?), crystal, lapis lazuli and faience and the absence of chert blades and terracotta cakes (Prufer 1952: 7-11).

Bedwa

The burials at Bedwa (29° 4'4" N; 76° 17' 45" E) were discovered accidentally during a clearance operation by the local villagers in the sand dunes located nearly 300 m southwest of the village (Shinde *et al* 2008: 87). Bedwa is at a distance of nearly 15 km north of Meham, in the district Rohtak in Haryana. The villagers noticed remains of human bones and pottery fragments from among the sand dunes. A team led by Vasant Shinde investigated the site and they brought to light the remains of 14 identifiable graves spread in an area of one hectare (Shinde *et al* 2008: 89). The burials were laid in an extended position on their back in a north – south orientation and often found with pottery as burial furniture, generally placed near the head portion (Shinde *et al* 2008: 89).

The variation in the internment of burial goods in the form of less or more pottery remains has been interpreted as a reflection of economic or social status of the buried individual. The burial pottery generally consisted of varying sizes of bowls, dish-on-stands, *lota*-shaped pots, perforated jars, spherical collarless pots, miniature pots and small beakers. The ceramics are generally plain in nature, except a few ones which contain simple black bands around their bodies. The remains of ash and bone fragments were also noticed in some of the pots, which are interpreted as possible post-

cremation burials. The burials are dated to early Late Harappan as most of the burials exhibition mature Harappan pottery characteristics like long stemmed dish-on-stands, perforated jars and beakers(Shinde *et al* 2008: 89).

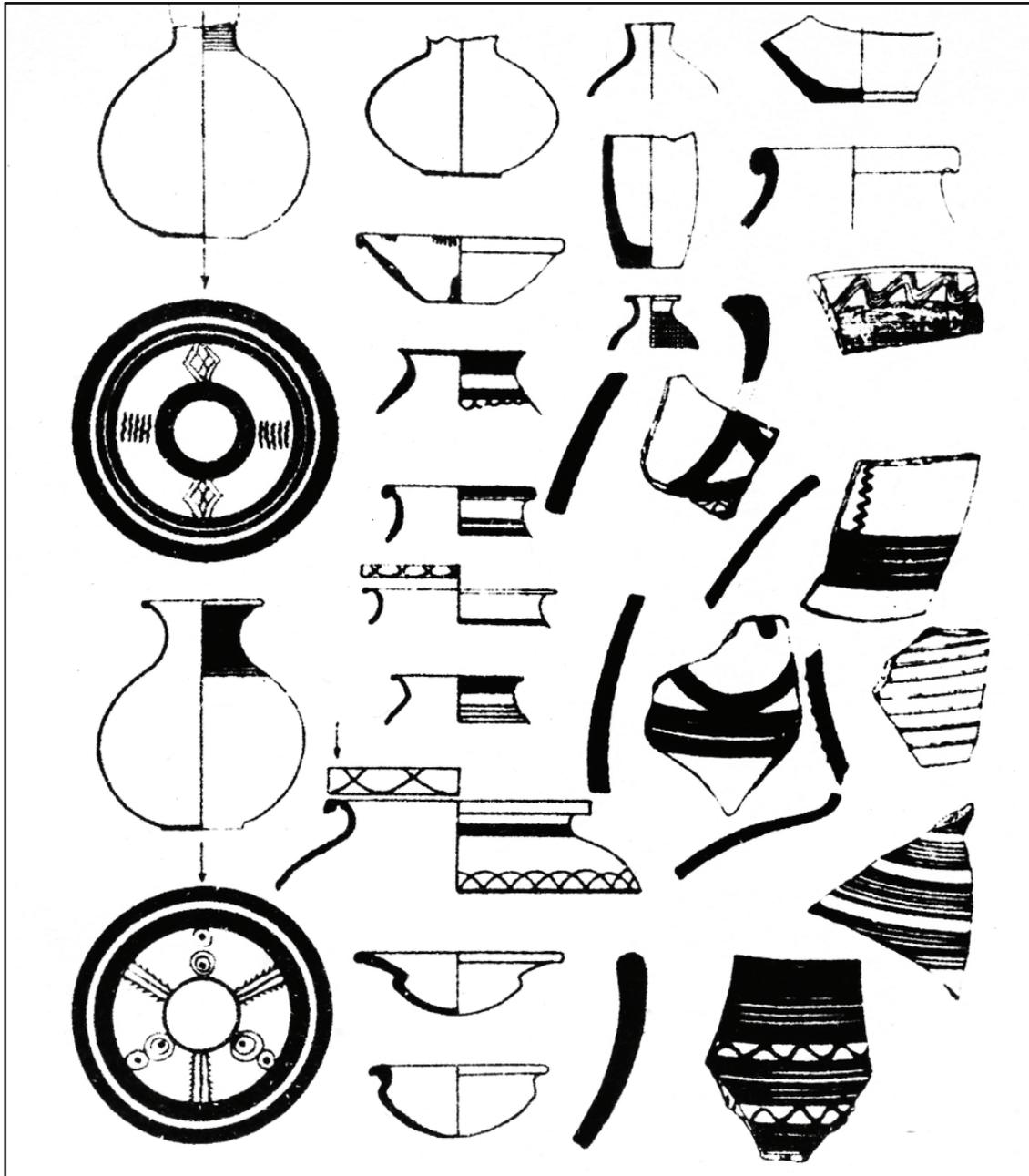


Figure 16: Late Harappan pottery types, Dher Majra

Puthi Seman

The burial site near Puthi Seman (29° 3' 47" N: 76° 18' 52" E) is located at a distance of 2 km from the village and 20 km from Meham in district Rohtak. The burial remains at Puthi Seman are estimated to have been spread over 1.2 ha and the nature of its

disposition is very much similar to the Bedwa evidence. At Puthi Seman too, the burials are oriented in north – south orientation and only one burial could be cleared *in situ* which also indicated placement of head and pelvic portions of the body on large flat fragments of storage jar (Shinde *et al* 2008: 91). The investigators also concluded that both the burials remains at Bedwa and Puthi Seman could have formed part of the cemetery complex of nearby Farmana due to the similarity of findings (Shinde *et al* 2008: 91).

Sanauli

The chance discovery of human skeletal remains from Sanauli (29° 8' 28" N; 77° 13' 1" E), district Baghpat, Uttar Pradesh in June 2004 brought to light the existence of a vast cemetery of late Harappan phase (Sharma *et al* 2005). The subsequent excavations by Archaeological Survey of India brought to light the remains of nearly 116 contexts (Fig. 17) from which well laid out burials and associated findings were reported (Sharma *et al* 2007). The post-excavation analysis of the reported burials along with their contexts and findings lead to identification of five categories (Prabhakar 2012), namely (A) Primary, (B) Primary / Disturbed, (C) Symbolic, (D) Disturbed and (F) Features that cannot be identified definitely as burials.

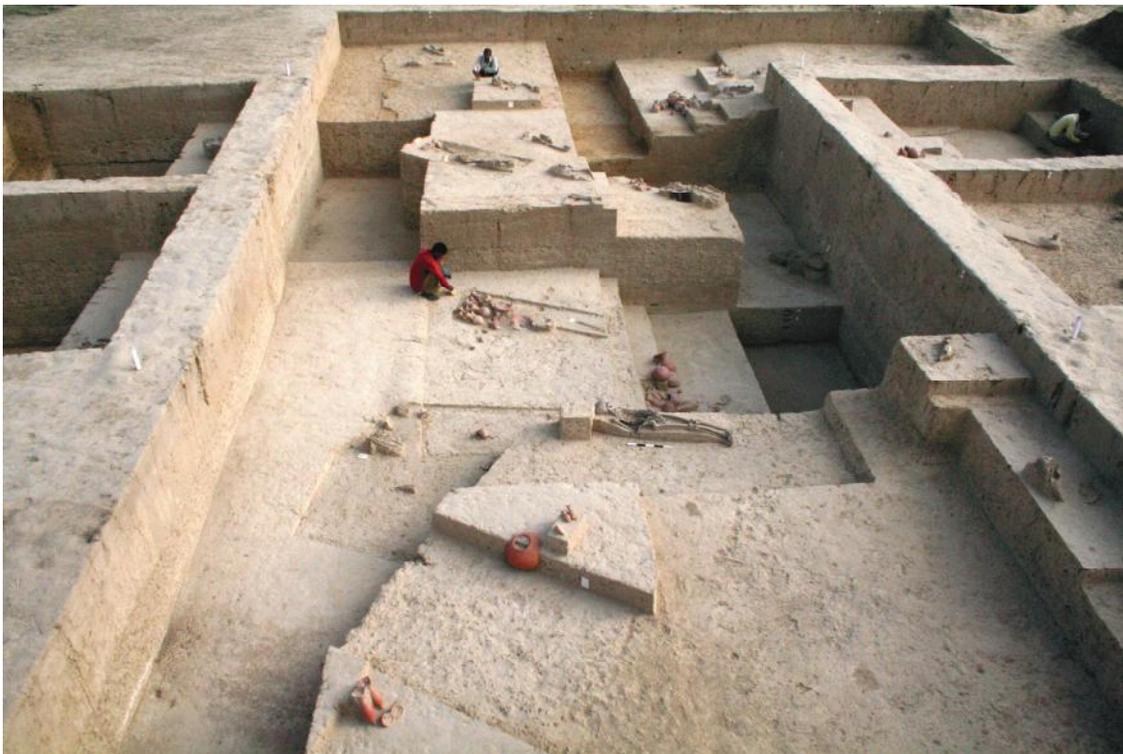


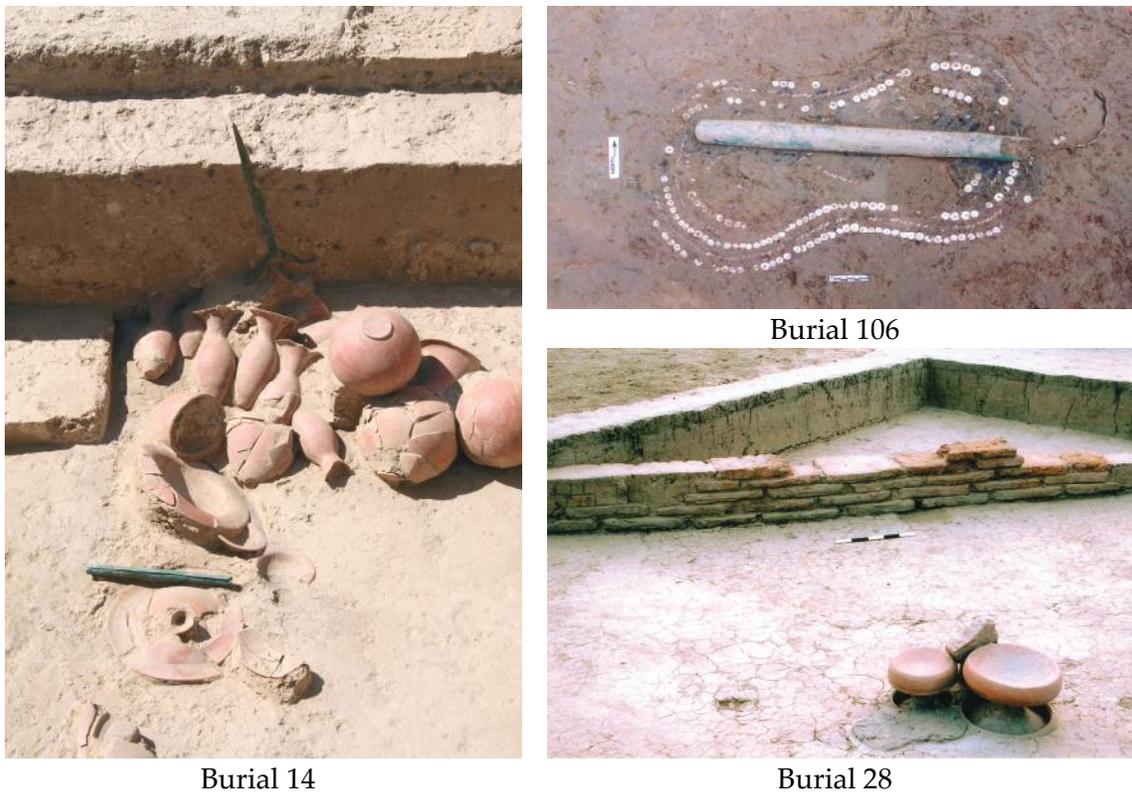
Figure 17: General view of the cemetery, Sanauli

The percentage-wise distribution of these categories as per the analysis is, "...39.66% of the burials (46 in number) belong to the Category B; 22.42% (26 in number) of Category E; 20.69% (22 in number) of Category D; 13.79% (16 in number) of Category A and 3.45% (4 in numbers) of Category C" (Prabhakar 2013: 86). The nature, context and

other details of the findings from excavation have been dealt in detail by Sharma *et al* (2007) and Prabhakar (2012, 2013, 2014a & 2014b).

The evidence at Sanauli indicates its long usage as a cemetery as different stratigraphic contexts indicates in the absence of absolute dates. Further, the findings from this also brought to light the probable interactions with the 'Copper Hoard' culture due to the presence of an antenna sword from one of the Burials. Another antenna sword was also discovered from the site prior to the excavation by the villagers. The general arrangement of burials at Sanauli clearly indicates continuity from the Harappan phase in terms of placement of bodily remains, associated burial furniture, with the exception that dish-on-stand was placed below the hip portion of the dead ones.

Further, the symbolic burials (Fig. 18) from Sanauli, four in number, and all are of different types. Three of them had remains of a human torso like receptacle, arranged in such a fashion to represent a deceased person. All the receptacles vary in terms of materials used from copper to faience to paste. While the copper receptacle is in the form of a shallow flat based tray holding around 30 miniature copper objects arranged in rows, the faience beads and paste discs were arranged to form the shape of a torso.



Burial 14

Burial 106

Burial 28

Figure 18: Symbolic Burial, Sanauli

Abhaipur

Abhaipur (28° 18' N; 79° 45' E) is locally known as *Abhaipur-Chena-Naktikhera* and is located nearly 1 km west of the village Abhaipur in district Pilibhit, Uttar Pradesh. The

ancient site is located nearly 1.5 km to the west of River Deoha, a tributary of River Ramganga and 35 km to the east of Bareilly. The site was excavated for three-staggered field seasons starting from 2001-02 and continued in 2003-04 and 2005-06 by Anup Misra and U.P. Arora of the M.J.P. Rohilkhand University, Bareilly (Misra and Arora 2006: 76-84). The excavation brought to light a four-fold cultural sequence, viz., Period I represented by Ochre Coloured Pottery (OCP), Period II by Black and Red Ware (BRW), Period III by Painted Grey Ware (PGW) and Period IV by Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW) (Misra and Arora 2006: 76-84).

The Burials from PGW Levels

The remains of two burials of the PGW culture, one of an adult (Fig. 19) and other of a child, were discovered during the field season 2005-06. The extended adult burial was found at a depth of 0.89 m below the surface and placed in an orientation of NE – SW direction. The burial was found below a layer of compact black soil spread across in the entire excavated area (Misra and Arora 2006: 81). It has been interpreted that the body of the deceased was “...interred in a shallow, narrow pit dug into the floor of a house (Misra and Arora 2006: 81).”



Figure 19: Details of Adult Burial, Abhaipur

The curved posture at the waist and the head along with legs raised in a slight elevation has been interpreted due to the small burial pit. The position of the skeleton reveals that the deceased was placed prone with a slight inclination towards the right and head faces right and the extant height of the individual is 1.7 m. The left arm is placed resting on the waist with fingers hanging down while the right arm is also folded with the palm in front of the chin. The associated burial goods included that of a wide mouthed, convex sided bowl of PGW, painted in red on the exterior and with impressions of designs on interior. The child burial was found to the northwest of the adult burial in a north – south orientation and at a depth of 0.56 m below the surface

(Misra and Arora 2006: 82). As in the case of the adult burial, the child burial was also interred below a floor level. The longer bones along with fragmentary skull bones were only preserved. The child was placed with legs in a flexed position, right hand on the waist, and lying to its right (Misra and Arora 2006: 82). This burial did not yield any burial goods.

The Burial Types of Northwest Pakistan

The burial types found from the Vale of Peshawar, Swat and Dir Valleys of Pakistan along with Bajaur and Mohmand Tribal Agencies are also grouped under 'Gandhara Graves' even though except the Vale of Peshawar, the remaining areas were never considered traditionally to be a part of Gandhara region (Zahir 2012: 5-6). The investigations in the above-mentioned areas during the second half of 20th century have brought to light a large number of sites of the Iron Age period. M. Zahir (2012: 17-18) has compiled the sites with cemeteries discovered from various regions as follows, Swat Valley (52 sites), Dir Valley (20 sites), Chitral (47 cemeteries), Bajaur and Mohmand Tribal Agencies (69 cemeteries), Vale of Peshawar (19 sites). Zahir (2012: 237-238), while stressing for a revised chronological framework of the cemeteries of this region due to the fact that the cremation and inhumation type of burials were present in all the periods in Dir and Swat Valley. The chronological framework as suggested by Bagnera *et al* (2011: 48-80) is Early Period (14th – 11th century BCE), Middle Period (10th – 8th century BCE) and Late Period (7th – 4th century BCE).



Figure 20: Upper stone construction, Timargarha 2



Figure 21: Upper stone construction, upper chamber and sealing stone, Timargarha 2

The important excavated cemeteries in the region are Kherai in Gorbard Valley (Stacul 1966: 261-274), Ghaligai (Stacul 1969: 44-91), Leobanr (Stacul 1976: 13-30), Aligrama (Stacul 1979: 88-90), Kalako Deray (Stacul 1993: 69-94), Barikot (Stacul 1985: 357-368), Bir-kot-ghundai (Stacul 1985: 205-212), Katelai & Butkara II (Stacul 1975: 323-332),

Timargarha (Dani 1967), Sarai-Khola (Halim 1970-71), Gogdara IV (Zahir 2012: 238), to name a few. The cultural chronology of the Swat Valley is based upon the excavations carried out at Ghaligai during 1960s by Stacul (1969). The chronology as defined by Stacul, which is still largely followed by the teams of IsMEO and UoP working in this region, is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Cultural Chronology of Ghaligai

Cultural Periods	Chronology	Cultural Assemblage
Period I	2400 – 2100 BCE (2970-2920 BCE)	All hand-made pottery, tempered with coarse sand, surface colour varying from red-brown to grey-brown; comparable with Chalcolithic sites of Turkmenistan.
Period II	1810±50 BCE (2180 BCE)	Found only at Ghaligai cave; pink or pinkish-brown pottery, made of fine paste and wheel-turned; comparable with Chalcolithic sites of northern Baluchistan and Indus valley by Stacul.
Period III	1505±50 BCE (1950-1920 BCE)	Strikingly different from Period II; Hand-made pottery of crude clay, mat impressions on the base; colour varies from grey-brown to red-brown; remains found from Ghaligai and Butkara I; compared with Phase I of Burzahom.
Period IV	1700 – 1500 BCE (1730-1300 BCE)	Comparable with Barikot, Leobanr III, Phase II of Kashmir, Tepe Hisar IIB-IIIB; handmade burnished, grey and buff wares of fine quality; red ware, wheel-turned with black bands; stone and bone tools, presence of copper.
Period V	1500 – 1000 BCE	Archaic phase of graveyards, cut into the ground on hill sides, covered with stone slabs; graves in cists, with sides, floor made of slabs; cremation dominates over inhumation; rectangular settlements of stones on hill sides; wheel-turned pottery, presence of copper; graves compared with Timargarha, potter with lowest levels of Charsada, Iron Age I of Western Iran and Phase V of Hasanlu.
Period VI	1000 – 500 BCE	Middle phase of graveyards, typology of Period V continues, but funeral dominates over inhumation and cremation; very fine, wheel-turned grey pottery; chalices and cup-on-stands common in graves; comparable with Hasanlu IV and Iron Age II of Western Iran.
Period VII	500 – 400 BCE	Late phase of graveyards, inhumation dominates; very fine wheel-turned red ware, decorated and incised; presence of copper and iron; anthropomorphic figures of terracotta with flat geometrical bodies.



**Figure 22: Cist grave,
Timargarha cemetery 1**



Figure 23: Face Urn containing post-cremation remains from Timargarha 2



**Figure 24: Flexed inhumation from
Timargarha cemetery 2**



**Figure 25: Disarticulated inhumation
from Timargarha cemetery 2**

The Burial Types

The available literature largely based on the excavations carried out by IsMEO and UoP defines the following burial types:

- *Graves consist of a lower and upper chambers constructed inside pits; constructed of slabs or masonry; the lower chambers contained human skeletal remains and grave goods (Figs. 20-22, 25);*
- *Interment consists of flexed inhumations (Figs. 23, 26), post-cremation (Fig. 24), and a combination of both; flexed inhumations in crouching position, turned towards right or left; head towards the mountain and legs towards valley;*
- *Post-cremation types consist interment of cremated remains like bones, ashes and charcoal in pottery urns and placed in the lower chamber, and in some cases in upper chamber also;*

- The pottery urns and box urns (Figs. 27 & 28) (with perforations, with lids and raised legs in some cases) are found used for post-cremation burials; sometimes pottery urns found in highly decorative condition (Zahir 2012: 40) with "...plastic, incised, ridges and rectangular / spherical perforations..." A pottery urn shape is particularly different and it (Zahir 2012: 40) has "...an applied (stylized) nose, perforations for mouth and eyes and applied eye brows, called a face or anthropomorphic urn..."
- The grave goods consist of pottery of grey and red ware types, numbers varying from a single vessel to many dozens; animal and human figurines (Zahir 2012: 40).



Figure 26: Examples of single flexed inhumations (a-c & f are from Leobanr I and remaining from Katelai cemetery)

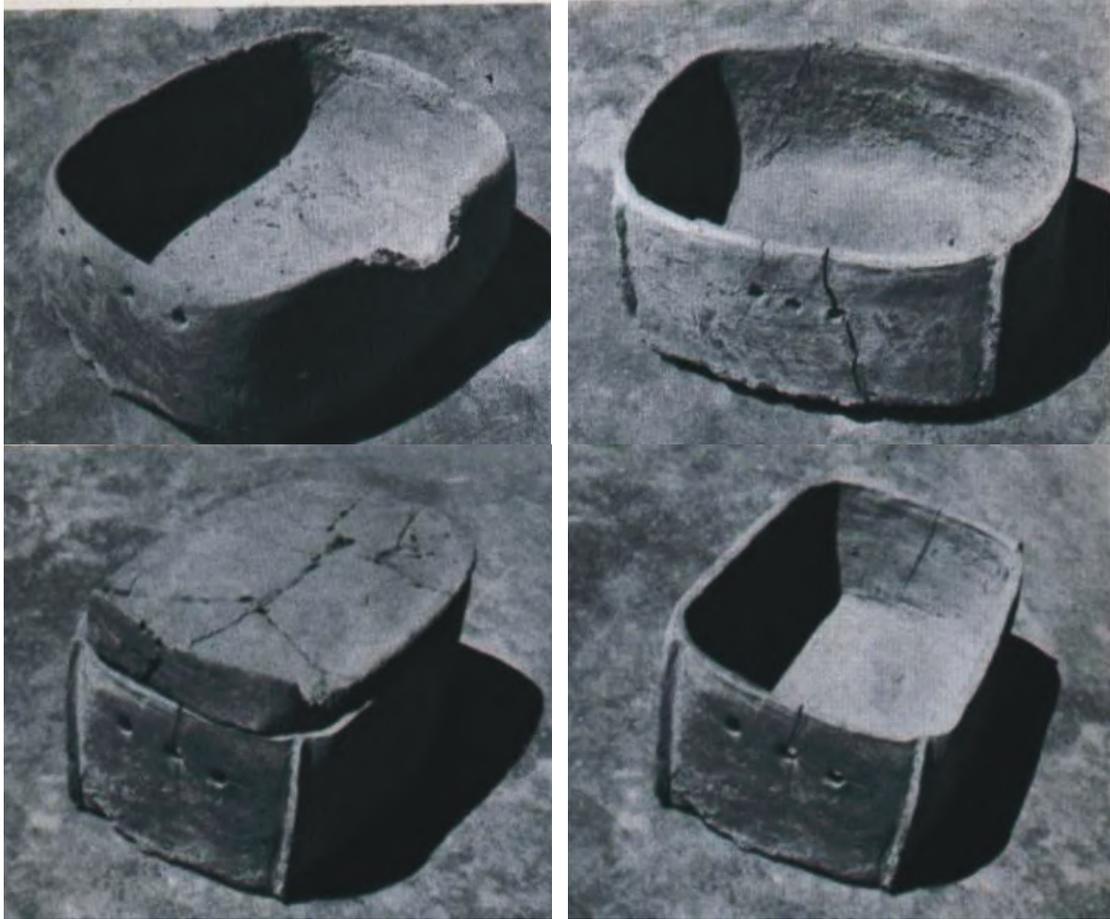


Figure 27: Excavated box-urn burials from Katelai I cemetery

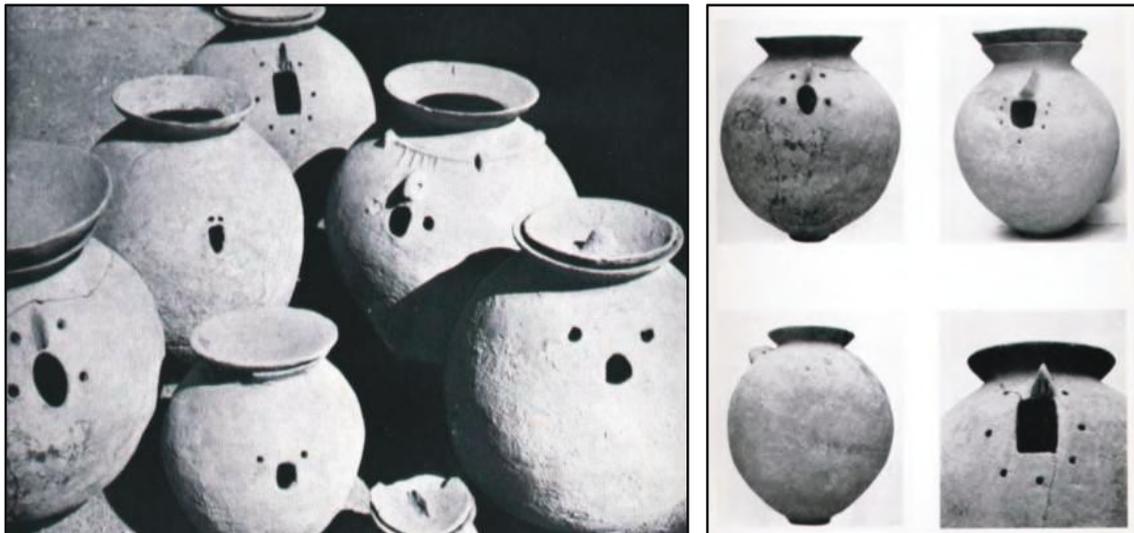


Figure 28: Face-urns from Katelai I (left) and Leobanr I (right) cemetery

Zahir, based on the 562 graves from eight cemeteries from excavated sites, has opined that 70% (392 graves) are inhumations, 27% (151 graves) are post-cremation burials and 3% (15 graves) contain both inhumation and post-cremation burials (Zahir 2012: 145).

Zahir (2012: 152) also groups the grave goods into four broad categories, consisting of “...pottery assemblage, copper/bronze artefacts (along with copper/bronze pins), terracotta spindle-whorls and iron artefacts ...a minor group of human and animal figurines.” The burial types has also been re-analysed by Zahir (2012: 161-170) and he proposes five broad classifications as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Zahir’s Classification of Burial Types

Type	Characteristics	Examples
Type I	Most elaborate, upper stone construction, upper and lower grave chambers	Timargarha I & II Cemeteries
Type II	Upper and lower grave chambers without upper stone construction.	Timargarha I & II Cemeteries
Type III	Cist graves, normally constructed of four vertical schist slabs; no upper construction and upper chamber.	Timargarha I & II, Kherai and Zarif Karuna cemeteries
Type IV	Dry-stone masonry lining or walls within the lower grave-chamber	Timargarha I & II, Zarif Karuna cemeteries, Katelai-I, Loebanr-I
Type V	Simple pit dug (either uniformly or irregularly) into the earth	–

The shapes noticed from among the various graves are rectangular, circular, oval, square and irregular while the orientation varied from northeast-southwest, north-south, east-west, and a majority of the graves were located on the slopes of hills (Zahir 2012: 175-176).

Conclusion

An attempt was made to understand the burial practices after the demise of Harappan Civilization during the second and first millennium BCE in South Asia. The late / post-urban Harappan phase has been considered here for the analysis to understand any continuity/discontinuity of burial practices that have been noticed during the preceding period.

The burial practices during the formative phases of Harappan civilization were flexed inhumations in utero position, either to the right or left, fractional, cremation and secondary burial customs. The extended inhumations dominated as the most preferred mode of burial during the Harappan phase, with a different architecture in the Kachchh region of Gujarat, wherein multiple modes of burials, mostly without skeletons are noticed (Prabhakar 2012). Another mode of burial dispensation is post-cremation urns which were prevalent at sites like Mohenjo-daro, Chanhudaro, and at Harappan during late Harappan phase. The site of Kalibangan also exhibits multiple modes of disposal of dead including pot burials. Thus, the Harappan phase exhibit a wide variety of disposal of dead, with completely dominating style of extended

inhumations in supine position, some within well constructed cenotaphs of mud-bricks or wood.

The broad burial types during the late/post-urban Harappan phase are extended inhumations in supine position, inhumations in flexed position, either turned towards left or right, post-cremation pot-burials. Among these burial types, the extended inhumations in supine position can be directly correlated with the typology of Harappan phase burials as mentioned above, while the others were less dominant. The evidence from Harappa, Bhagwanpura, Puthi Seman, Bedwa and Sanauli clearly shows continuity in the extended inhumations placed in supine position. In particular, the Cemetery H at Harappa shows two stratigraphic horizons, Stratum II yielding only extended inhumations with a few flexed burials, while Stratum I, yielding pot burials. The flexed burials from Harappa from Stratum II burials are also indications of surviving traditions of formative phases during which these type placement of deceased ones are noticed. Similarly, the burials from 'Gandhara Grave' sites also have the flexed skeletal remains indicating some sort of continuity. The Sanauli burials are good indicators of interaction with other cultures and adopting a totally different pattern of symbolic burials conveying a departure from the already pronounced practices.

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