Chapter 1

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Archaeological investigations in the post-independence era brought to light a number of Harappan sites within the borderlands of India and since then the Harappan Civilization has been the intriguing area of research amongst scholars all over the world. Archaeologists in the past had stressed upon the sameness or “homogeneity” of the Harappan Civilization spread across a vast area. However in the recent times deeper probe into the various facets of this dynamic civilization was made and micro-level studies were undertaken to understand its extent, nature and character. These studies have helped in elucidating the similarities and differences within the Harappan tradition in the whole of the Indian sub-continent. Moreover many new concepts about its beginning, development and survival have either been expanded or replaced by fresh hypotheses. This new dimension of development and expansion of the Harappan Civilization into different geographical areas under its influence has been explained as regional variations which became the focus of Harappan research in the present times.

As far as the Harappan studies in India are concerned, Gujarat has been one of the most extensively explored regions, with more than five hundred Harappan and Harappan-related sites. These sites belong to the different phases of Harappan occupation and are spread across all the major geographical regions of Gujarat, namely Kachchh, Mainland of Gujarat and Saurashtra. The various categories of sites include big urban centres like Dholavira (Bisht 1994), and Surkotada (Joshi 1990); towns or craft production centres like Lothal (Rao 1985), Nagwada (Hegde et. al 1988), Bagasra (Sonawane et. al. 2004; Bhan et. al. 2005) and Kuntasi (Dhavalikar et. al. 1996); other fortified settlements like Rojdi (Possehl and Raval 1989), Jaidak (IAR 1991-92; Ajithprasad 2008), Babarkot (Possehl 1994); rural centres and villages like Rangpur (Rao 1963), and Padri (Shinde and Kar 1992; Shinde 1998), Prabhas Patan (Dhavalikar and Possehl 1992), Vagad (Sonawane and Mehta 1985), Kanewal (Mehta et. al. 1980), and temporary pastoral
encampments like Orio Timbo (Rissman 1985; Rissman and Chitalwala 1990), Jokha (Mehta et. al. 1971) and Dhatva (Mehta et. al. 1975).

Earlier it was assumed that the Harappans were the first agricultural communities to have settled in Gujarat after migrating only during the Mature Phase (2600-2000 B.C.). But excavations at Loteshwar (Bhan 1994, Ajithprasad and Sonawane 1993), Nagwada (Hegde et. al 1989) and Datrana (Ajithprasad 2002) all in North Gujarat and Padri (Shinde 1992) as well as re-analysis of the data from Prabhas Patan (Dhavalikar and Possehl 1992) in Saurashtra specially brought forth new facts altogether. The calibrated C\textsuperscript{14} dates from the early Chalcolithic cultural phase at Loteshwar, Padri and Prabhas Patan go back to the second half of the fourth and beginning of the third millennium BC, thus making them more than half a millennium earlier than any Harappan immigrants (Ajithprasad and Sonawane 1993, Sonawane and Ajithprasad 1994, Sonawane 2002). Another regional Chalcolithic pottery type that occurs along with the Harappan pottery at Lothal, and sites in the Bhal region of Saurashtra, is the Micaceous Red Ware (Rao 1963, 1985; Herman and Krishnan 1994). These studies revealed that Gujarat was already inhabited by regional non-Harappan Chalcolithic communities prior to the Harappan occupation.

In spite of the individuality of these regional cultures as distinct from each other, interaction between them cannot be ruled out. The similarities are particularly noticeable in the pottery assemblage. The convex sided bowl, characteristic of the Sorath Harappan is also found in the Prabhas ware from the site of Prabhas Patan, and also reported in the Padri ware assemblage, differed in the clay fabric and surface treatment. The stud-handled bowl, a type-fossil vessel of the Chalcolithic sites in Saurashtra, was first found in the Micaceous Red Ware and frequently occurs in the Sorath Harappan sites. In fact, similarity in vessel forms, especially in some of the bowls, is also noticed between Padri Ware and the Anarta ware from north Gujarat. The Pre-Prabhas pottery is also reported from the site of Datrana. The burial pottery from the sites of Nagwada, Santhli and Moti Pipli in north Gujarat as well as from Surkotada in Kachchh have been reported as bearing similarities to the Pre-/Early Harappan pottery from Kot Diji, Amri, etc.
(Ajithprasad 2000). Besides the Chalcolithic levels at Loteshwar and Nagwada, have Harappan materials like, steatite micro-beads, semiprecious stone beads and Rohri chert blades (only at Nagwada). The beginning of regional Anarta pottery from north Gujarat has been dated to the second half of the fourth millennium BC. While the Anarta sites continued through the Urban Phase and at several sites is also associated with Rangpur IIB-C, surviving further into the Post-Urban phase (Ajithprasad 2000). This clearly indicated that the interaction of the regional cultures of north Gujarat and the sites in Kachchh with the Harappans from Sindh and Baluchistan, had begun in the Pre-Harappan times and this tradition continued into the Post-Urban phases. This gradual influx of the Harappans from Sindh and Baluchistan towards south into Kachchh and their interaction in all probability continued further south into Saurashtra and in turn also influenced the indigenous cultures of the area.

The presence of the large number of sites of varied nature, yet showing evidence of interaction, became the focus of attention for the scholars dealing with the Harappan Civilization. Studies revealed that the Harappan sites in Kachchh and Saurashtra displayed certain differences in the nature of the settlements as well as in the pottery assemblage. The Harappan settlements in Kachchh were found to be closely associated with their counterparts in Sindh and Punjab region in their architecture and material inventory; while the sites in Saurashtra revealed features not common to the former, yet retaining the Harappan legacy. The distinctive trend in the material culture of the Harappan sites in Saurashtra was observed by Subbarao (1958) and even by several other scholars like Nanavati (1962), Wheeler (1966, 1968), etc. Their observations revealed as having a more complex character, comprising of more regional traits that gave a new dimension to the Harappan research in Gujarat.

Archaeological investigations of Harappan sites in Saurashtra may be said to have begun systematically with the excavations at Rangpur by S. R. Rao in the 1950s and the establishment of the “Rangpur Sequence” (Rao 1963). It is significant because for the first time, it revealed direct stratigraphic relation of “Late Harappan” phase (Rangpur...
IIB) with that of “Mature Harappan” (Rangpur IIA). This was followed by the discovery of a number of Harappan sites belonging to the Rangpur IIB-C phase, thereby identifying Saurashtra as a potential zone for Harappan settlements. Possehl (Possehl and Ravall989) called the Harappan sites in Kachchh as “Sindhi Harappan” or Classical Harappan and the sites comparable to Rangpur IIB-C phases in Saurashtra as “Sorath Harappan”, drawing on one of the ancient names of Saurashtra. Based on the excavations at Rojdi (Possehl et. al. 1984; Possehl et. al 1985; Possehl and Raval 1989), Possehl observed on the pottery and other implements to be different from those sites in Sindh and Kachchh and thus defined the Sorath Harappan as the “regional manifestation of the Urban Harappan Phase in Saurashtra”. By “Harappan Urban Phase” he referred to the phase coincident with the period of literacy and the making of the Classic Indus stamp seals in addition to several type-fossil artifacts of the Indus civilization. Possehl describes the various characteristics of the Sorath Harappan as follows:

“...there is none of the classic black-on-red painting style of the pottery, but the vessel forms are very much alike as is the technology used to prepare the clay, fashion the pots and fire them. There are no seals and little writing, but there are weights and measures, etched carnelian beads and copper implements of definite Harappan type” (Possehl 1992).

Further Possehl and Herman (1990) while analyzing the ceramic assemblage had pointed out the absence of the key Urban Phase ceramic markers, like the goblet, beaker, ‘S’ profile jar, perforated jar and the teacup with a perforated handle. They had also noticed other differences in the manner of surface treatment on the pottery from Rojdi and ascribed these to be part of the Sorath Harappan pottery. Similarly, the characteristic Classical Harappan copper implements, stone beads, shell bangles and other craft items are either absent or found in very small numbers at the site. Inscribed seals and sealings were completely unknown except for a potsherd showing a graffito in Harappan script (IAR 1957-58). Until the second half of the 1980’s a majority of the Sorath Harappan sites were regarded as the so called “Late Harappan” or Post-Urban Harappan as they were all categorized to either Period IIB-C or III of the Rangpur sequence. But the
radiocarbon dates from Rojdi revealed that they were not “Late” but contemporaneous to the Mature/Urban Phase Harappan of Sindh. In the recent years Sorath Harappan has been characterized by the material inventory from several other sites like Kuntasi, Vagad, Babarkot, Orio Timbo and Jaidak in Saurashtra.

With this background the present research work is an attempt to ascertain in detail and define the various cultural traits of the Sorath Harappan. Further the present study is also aimed at highlighting the similarities and differences in the material remains between the Classical Harappan and the Sorath Harappan sites. Although its chronological position is well defined, the cultural attributes, other than pottery, remain undefined or ill-defined, which call for proper attention and study. One of the areas that require detailed study is the features of the Sorath Harappan architecture. The present study will help in providing an insight regarding the nature of Sorath Harappan in terms of whether or not it is an indigenous culture with a definite identity, yet possessing features indicative of interaction with the Harappans, peculiar to the region of Saurashtra; or simply an amalgamation of regional traditions within the broader framework of the Harappan cultural milieu.

With the above aims in view the present research work was undertaken with the fresh and first hand data available from the recent excavations at the site of Jaidak (Pithad) in the Jamnagar district, carried out by the Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, The M. S. University of Baroda for two consecutive seasons (2005-'06 and 2006-'07). The site at Jaidak (23° 39.5’N; 70° 34.43’E) is located about 4.5km southeast of the Pithad village on the right bank of the river Aji in the Jodiya taluka of the Jamnagar district. The material assemblage collected during the excavation from the site of Pithad (Jaidak) have been analyzed on a comparative basis with cultural traits in other Harappan sites like Rangpur in the Surendranagar district and Lothal in the Ahmedabad district, Rojdi, Kuntasi and Bagasra in the Rajkot district of Saurashtra and Surkotada in Kachchh. Rojdi and Kuntasi have been used as key sites for chronological comparison because they have more comprehensive cultural sequence and the materials from Jaidak bear closer resemblance to these sites. The antiquities and pottery from Jaidak were further analyzed.
utilizing the Mohenjo Daro pottery report (Dales and Kenoyer 1986) as reference for standard Classical Harappan pottery with an aim to bring out the differences and similarities between the two sites.

To understand the nature of the Harappan settlement at Jaidak as well as the Harappan settlement pattern of the area, an intensive survey of the area within a radius of 20km from the site was undertaken. The materials collected during the survey were analyzed and compared with the excavated sites in the survey region. The nature of these settlements in relation to each other and with that of Jaidak also needs to be understood. Every region is occupied for a specific purpose and in order to analyze this purpose and the factors influencing it, an intensive survey of the surrounding region of a site is very essential. Thus a survey within the area of 20km radius was aimed at locating the resource zones of the raw materials for the various artifacts found at Jaidak. Inhabitants generally draw their resources from the area closest to their settlement and the area surrounding a site has been defined as the catchment area of that site (Vita-Finzi and Higgs 1970). Therefore it is important to locate the resource areas for procuring raw materials for building activities, clay for pottery and terracotta objects, semi-precious stones for making beads and other lithic implements, shell, copper, etc. Besides in order to understand the subsistence strategies adopted by the Harappans at Jaidak it is necessary to understand the availability of arable and grazing land, potable water source, etc. All these factors play a major role in shaping the material culture of a site.

Within the above broad framework the following are the main objectives of the study:

1. To study and document the Chalcolithic remains at Pithad with a view of understanding the Sorath Harappan and Classical Harappan cultural traits at the site.

2. To identify and define the various cultural attributes of Sorath Harappan – architecture, specialized crafts, exchange or trade links etc.

3. To understand the effect of environmental factors, the proximity of raw materials and the nature of raw materials on the typology of the assemblage.
4. To delineate similarities and dissimilarities between the Sorath and Sindhi Harappan cultural traits.

5. To study the extent and distribution of the Sorath Harappan characteristics in Saurashtra, with reference to the site of Pithad and other settlements in the Jamnagar district and the adjoining districts of Rajkot and Surendranagar.

6. To see if there is a pattern that can be established on the basis of above comparative study that would help to define Sorath Harappan characteristics.

7. To probe the origin of Sorath Harappan characteristics in the light of above studies, in the larger cultural context in Gujarat.

8. To determine the role of regional traits and their influence in the development of Sorath Harappan material culture.

The time period of the majority of the sites dealt in the text is more or less confined to the second half of the third millennium B.C. and is sufficiently supported by the radiocarbon dates. Although some of the sites in the survey region were found to continue into the Medieval period, these were not dealt with as they exceed the scope of the present study.

In the present study although the sites of Rojdi and Kuntasi were taken for comparing the cultural sequence and ascertaining the Sorath Harappan traits at the site of Jaidak and the sites in its surrounding region, the "Rangpur Sequence" (Rao 1963) forms the chronological basis of all these sites. Scholars have interpreted the Rangpur sequence and used it according to the need of their study. This gave rise to ambiguity and confusion regarding the proper correlation of the Rangpur sequence with that of the Harappan chronological framework of Early, Mature and Late Phases. Thus Rangpur IIA had been defined as the late or degenerate phase of the Mature/Urban Harappan, while Rangpur IIB-C and III as the Post-Urban Harappan culture (Rao 1963; Possehl 1980; Bhan 1986). However, excavations at Rojdi and the new set of radiocarbon dates from there suggested that Rojdi A and B (corresponding to Rangpur IIA and IIB respectively) fall within the time bracket of the Mature/Urban Harappan phase. Subsequently,
Harappan scholars therefore reviewed the earlier periodization thus: Rojdi A, B and Rangpur IIA, IIB belong to the Mature/Urban Harappan Phase (2600-1900 B.C.) while Rojdi C and Rangpur IIC and III (the last one refers to the Lustrous Red Ware phase which is incidentally absent at Rojdi) fall under the Post-Urban Harappan (1900-1700 B.C.). This chronological framework has been used in the present study. The terms “Pre-Urban”, “Urban” and “Post-Urban” were proposed by Possehl (1977), for the Harappan cultural tradition to eliminate the confusion over use of the terms Pre and/or Early and Late Harappan. These terms have been defined and discussed in detail in Chapter 4 of this text.

The present study, on the broader front has brought forth several similarities and differences between the nature and character of the Sorath Harappan and the Classical Harappan sites in Gujarat. These similarities and differences will aid in adding upon the definition of Sorath Harappan as proposed by Possehl (Possehl and Raval 1989). A wider perspective has been adopted in this study to include all the possible spheres of the material culture, such as architecture, subsistence, nature of interaction with the neighbouring Harappan sites, besides the detailed morphological and comparative analysis of the artifact categories. All these features were studied taking Jaidak as the type-site and therefore its role as an important Sorath Harappan site has also been emphasized.

Survey of the fifteen reported sites in the study area revealed the existence of seven proper Sorath Harappan sites in the region. It was noticed that majority of the settlements in the region including Jaidak, are located on the banks of rivers or streams. A few sites were also located near to natural depressions, ponds, tanks or lakes. The sites are located in the fertile zone of either river alluvium or the black cotton soil. Pastures are also located close to most of the sites.

The study also revealed that most of the raw materials required for construction and for the production of lithic tools, terracotta objects and pottery, copper objects, shell
objects, etc. are mostly within the accessible limits of these sites. However the Sorath Harappans were not great craft specialists, which is yet another characteristic feature. But these sites played a major role in procuring the raw materials from the resource zones especially located in the Jamnagar and Rajkot districts, and distributing and transporting them subsequently to the Classical Harappan craft production centers located in Kachchh and Saurashtra. The entire area thus seems to possess a congenial environment for the sustenance of the Sorath Harappans for quite a long period of time.