PREFACE

Ever since R.D. Banerji discovered in 1992 the ruins of the city Mohenjo Daro beneath a Buddhist stupa in district Larkana in sind, a protohistoric phase was added to the known past of India.

The Indus or Harappan culture, which was the first to be so identified was protohistoric not because it did not know writing, but because its writing could not be deciphered. It was not still prehistoric, because it could be dated through links with West Asian cultures, whose chronology was fixed by written records duly deciphered. By 1950, other protohistoric cultures had been identified, the so-called “Baluchistan cultures” preceding Harappan culture, and the Cemetery-H and Jhukar cultures following Harappan decline (Piggott, S., 1950). But on the Indian side of the post 1947 frontier nothing except a shadowy “copper-hoard” cultures had become known. But since then strenuous and widespread archaeological work has helped to fill up the map of India with different “cultures” contemporaneous with and subsequent to the mature Harappan, down to the beginning of the “historical” period set at about 500 BC.


It is now perhaps, time that the extensive evidence be synthesized in a geographical framework, much an attempt: can by no means escape the persistent problems of chronology, locating ‘diagnostic factors’ behind cultures (so far restricted heavily to types of pottery) and sequence of technological development. Rather it adds to all these problems two major dimensions, viz territorial domains of different cultures and spatial cultural expansion.

In order to grapple with these questions, an attempt is made in Chapter I to provide the essential geographical background. The bulk of the thesis comprises a site-by-site survey of all protohistoric cultures, classified by geographical zones. Only the South Indian neolithic-chalcolithic sites are more summarily treated, for,
though important in itself, the evolution of this culture does not conform to the pattern of evolution of protohistoric cultures in the remaining parts of the country. The basic site-wise information is assembled in Chapter III; and Chapter II offers an introduction to, and Chapter IV an interpretation of, the evidence that Chapter III contains.

It must begin by disowning any ambition to offer a variant of geographical determinism. Human societies were already protohistoric times far too complex, and far too flexible, to make the hypothesis of such determinism convincing. But the geographical environment formed the setting in which protohistoric societies functioned. Rainfall, soils, mineral resources, forests and their derizens, were all important factors behind extent and methods of agriculture, domestication of animals, the role of “gathering” vs. production, and so on.

So far as possible, I have avoided any recourse to ethnic or anthropological interpretations so popular till the 1960’s and unluckily reviving now once again. I feel that Cavalli-Sforza, et al. 1994, have offered us a sufficient warning against recourse to race “for explaining the primitive (= “aboriginal”) and the advanced (= “aryan”) by invoking unproven racial categories. Such restraint has prevented me from unduly speculating on population movements in protohistoric India, which, given my geographical concerns, may appear a little odd.

I now pass on to the pleasant tasks of acknowledgement of my varied debts.

I am lucky to have been the pupil of Professor R.C. Gaur and Professor M.D.N. Sahi, both of whom have done so much to further our knowledge of PGW- a major protohistoric culture of Northern India. Professor M.D.N. Sahi supervised my earlier work on this thesis, and I am deeply grateful to the attention he paid me.

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