ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

The present chapter briefly illustrates the summary of the published reports of the three excavated sites, namely: Vagad, Nageswar and Ratanpura in Gujarat State. The chemical and petrographic analysis described in the later chapters are carried out on the pottery samples recovered in the stratified excavations of these sites. These sites are located in different lithological regions.

2.2 Vagad

Vagad (22°19' N., 71°52' E.) is a small village on the right bank of the Bhadar river in Dhandhuka Taluka of Ahmedabad district of Gujarat State (Figure A-1). The archaeological mound, locally known as Kedio-Timbo, located to the south-east at the distance of about 1.5 km. from the modern village was excavated during the 1981-82 field season by the Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, M.S. University of Baroda (Sonawane et al 1985). The mound covers an area of 450 m x 300 m and rises to a height of 2 m from the surrounding plain.
LOCATION OF VAGAD, NAGESWAR AND RATANPURA

Fig. A-1
Excavation at Vagad has revealed a single period occupation which can be divided into three phases viz., IA, IB and IC, based on the successive superimposed three structural levels. Significant discoveries from this site are: (1) a variety of good quality Harappan pottery, (2) four circular clay lined fire pits constructed within a slightly raised mud platform, identified as Yajna-Vedika, (3) terracotta and stone weights, (4) storage jars found buried underneath the circular hut floors, (5) pulley shaped terracotta ear ornaments, (6) a partially ground broken stone celt, (7) a variety of graffity on the potsherds and (8) beads of carnelian, agate, jasper, chert, lapis-lazuli, jade, faience, steatite, paste, chank, dentalium shell and terracotta (Sonwane, et al. 1985).

2.2.1 Pottery

The Harappan period pottery from Vagad consists of sturdy Red Ware along with the Buff Ware, Chocolate Slipped Ware and micaceous red ware (Figures A2, A3 & A.4). Besides these good quality pottery, crude and ill-fired pottery are also present. They are coarse red ware, coarse grey ware and coarse black and red ware (Figure A.5). The upper layers of period IC consists of typical white painted black and red ware.

The Red Ware pottery consists of convex sided bowls, dishes, dishes-on-stand with carinated shoulders, square or
beaded rimmed jars, vessels with out-turned beaded rim and rounded belly, basins and goblets. A few of these pottery were painted using black pigments in geometric and naturalistic designs. The shapes of Buff Ware vessels were analogous to that of Red Ware. In addition to the above shapes, a jar stand was present in the Buff Ware variety. The Buff Ware pottery were painted with light dark or brown coloured pigments depicting geometric motifs. The shapes encountered in the Chocolate Slippered Ware variety were dishes, dishes-on-stand, convex bowls and miniature vessels.

Painted decorations were done on the Red and Buff Ware using a black or a dark chocolate pigment. The designs were mostly groups of vertical as well as horizontal lines. The micaceous red ware is characterised by bowls of different shapes and the stud-handled bowl, the type fossil of Saurashtra Harappans (Wheeler 1968: 65). Designs encountered on these pottery are hatched diamonds—single or multiple, alternate triangles hatched in quadrants, fish net designs in hooks and floral motifs.

Among the coarse wares, grey ware, red ware and black and red ware were prominent. Jars, basins, dishes and cooking vessels including a frying pan with perforated knob-like handle were the shapes of coarse grey pottery. Incised marks and concentric corrugations were used to decorate the shoulder portions of a few jars. Forms of
coarse red pottery were analogous to sturdy Red Ware throughout the layers except that of everted rimmed bowls with or without carination in period IC. Coarse black and red ware shapes were restricted to globular pots. Convex sided bowls and everted rimmed bowls formed the assemblage of white painted black and red ware.

Hollow cross, boat, ladder, giraff(?), chess-board pattern, cross with a trident at each end, arrow marks, swastikas and stars were the graffiti representations on the pot-sherds.

The excavators have found strong affinities in the ceramic types, forms, fabrics and decorations of Vagad with those of Rangpur Period IIB, Lothal B, Rojdi IA-B and Surkotada IC. Thus based on the above mentioned material remains Vagad has been dated to the Late or degenerate phase of the mature Harappan Culture in a rural setting (towards the mid centuries of the second millennium B.C.) (Sonawane et al 1985).

2.3 Nageswar

Nageswar (22° 20'N, 69° 03'E.) is situated 17 km. northeast of Dwarka in the Okhamandal, taluka of Jammagar district of Gujarat State (Figure A.1). The site located on the north-eastern edge of a large 12 km² perennial sweet water lake, locally known as Bhimaja Talav, was excavated during the 1983-84 field season by the Department of
Excavations have revealed a single period deposition with two sub-periods which are designated as IA and IB. Major findings of this site include (1) a variety of typical Harappan pottery, (2) rammed mud floors associated with phase IA and in the lower levels of phase IB - and stone rubble structures associated with the upper levels of phase IB, (3) evidence of a shell working industry, (4) agate cubical weight, (5) terracotta objects (triangular cakes, pinched lumps, toy cart frame and spindle whorls), (6) beads of carnelian, faience, steatite, terracotta and dentalium, (7) a folded sheet and wire made of copper (8) spherical whet stones with small depressions and a cylindrical stone piece used for polishing shell bangles and (9) a circular fire pit lined with clay wall showing vitrification marks with a channel towards the south identified as a fire alter (Hegde et al 1985).

2.3.1 Pottery

The important pottery types from Nageswar were Red Ware, Reserved Slip Ware and Grey Ware (Figure A.6 and A.7). The excavators have found a good agreement in the typology and decorative motifs of Nageswar ceramics with those of Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, Chanhudaro and Surkotada (1A and 1B).
The various shapes encountered in the Red Ware are dishes, dishes-on-stand with centrally incised designs, globular pots, perforated jars, portion of an s-profile jar, goblets, bowls with an externally projecting rim, convex sided bowls and various floral, faunal and geometric motifs on them. Amongst the Grey Ware, sherds of bowls and pots and a full pot were recovered. The other pottery encountered besides those described above were Chocolate Slipped Ware, cream slipped ware, coarse ware, incised red ware, Buff Ware, polychrome ware and rusticated ware.

Other pottery like Lustrous Red Ware, a characteristic ware of the IIC and III periods of Rangpur and black and red ware of Lothal A and B, Rangpur IIA, IIB, IIC and III, Surkotada IIC and Desalpur IC was absent at Nageswar. Thus based on the ceramic assemblage and other material evidence the excavators suggest a chronological relationship for Nageswar with IA and IB phases of Surkotada and IA of Desalpur. Hence the probable date of Nageswar is to be in the last centuries of third and early centuries of the second millennium B.C. Radiocarbon samples recovered from the site are yet to be assayed. (Hegde et al. 1985).

2.4 Ratanpura

Ratanpura (23°28' N., 71°48' E.) is on the right bank of the Rupen river 5 kms. south of Sankheswar in Sami Taluka of Mehsana district of North Gujarat (Figure A.1). The site
situated south of the present day village at a distance of 1 km. was excavated by the Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, M.S. University of Baroda (Indian Archaeology, a review 1984-85) during the field season of 1984-85. There were four mounds, viz., mound I and II rich in late Harappan material, mound III rich in microlithic tools and bone fragments and finally mound IV with circular pits and numerous terracotta lumps.

Excavation on the late Harappan mound has revealed a single period occupation with two structural phases in sub-periods Ratanpura A and B. The major cultural relics recovered from this site are: (1) pottery having late Harappan characteristics, (2) evidence of circular huts with post holes, (3) evidence of hearths on the floor level, (4) household objects like querns, pestles, sherds of storage jars, cooking vessels and bowls used for serving food and drinks, (5) terracotta lumps with two or four pinch marks, mushtikas and oval shaped lumps with pointed ends, (6) stamped clay lumps, (7) a variety of ornamental beads of terracotta, faience, chank, paste, steatite and carnelian, (8) spindle whorls, (9) discs and pellets, (10) chank bangle fragments, (11) inlay pieces and (12) ceremonial pits (Indian Archaeology, a review 1984-85).
2.4.1 Pottery

The ceramic assemblage consists of a variety of Red Ware, Buff Ware, Chocolate Slipped Ware, Lustrous Red Ware, black and red ware, rusticated ware, cream slipped ware, tanned ware, coarse grey ware and coarse red ware (Figure A.8 and A.9). Amongst the total ceramic collection, the black and red ware pottery at Ratanpura deserve special attention. This is the only site that has yielded black and red ware in substantial quantities in the late Harappan context. Numerous shapes of this pottery have been encountered.

Based on the typology of the pottery and other cultural relics from this site, the excavators have correlated them with period II C and III of Rangpur (Indian Archaeology: A review 1984-85).

Thus the three sites included in this study represent mature Harappan phase (Nageswar) initial phase of the late Harappan (Vagad) and final phase of the late Harappan (Ratanpura) tradition in Gujarat.
References

Hegde, K.T.M., Bhan, K.K., and Sonawane, V.H. (1985)


Cambridge University Press, London.
Fig. A.2 Red Ware (1-13) from Vagad
(Courtesy: Dept. of Archaeology, M.S. University of Baroda)
Fig. A.3  Red Ware (14) and Buff Ware (15-22) from Vagad
(Courtesy: Dept. of Archaeology, M.S. University of Baroda)
Fig. A.4 Buff Ware (23-24), Chocolate Slipped Ware (25-29) and micaceous red ware (30-34) from Vagad (Courtesy* Dept. of Archaeology, M.S. University of Baroda)
Fig. A.5 Micaceous red ware (35), Coarse black and red ware (36), Coarse grey ware (37-40) and white painted black and red ware from Vagad
(Courtesy: Dept. of Archaeology, M.S. University of Baroda)
Fig. A.6 Red Ware (1-11) from Nageswar
(Courtesy: Dept. of Archaeology,
M.S. University of Baroda)
Red Ware (12-21), Grey Ware (22, 23) and coarse red ware (24-26) from Nageswar
(Courtesy: Dept. of Archaeology, M.S. University of Baroda)
Fig. A.8  Red Ware (1-15) from Ratanpura  
(Courtesy: Dept. of Archaeology, M.S. University of Baroda)
Fig. A.9 Buff Ware (16-17), Chocolate Slipped Ware (18-19), Lustrous Red Ware (20-21), Fine quality white painted black and red ware (22-23), Coarse black and red ware (24-25), Coarse red ware (26-27) and Coarse grey ware (28-30) from Ratanpura (Courtesy: Dept. of Archaeology, M.S. University of Baroda)