SYNOPSIS

Introduction

The main aim of this thesis is to bring out the origin, existence, characteristic features, extent and dispersal of regional Chalcolithic cultures/traditions in Gujarat in a comprehensive way. It further deals with identifying the similarities and differences between Regional Chalcolithic cultures/traditions and Sindhi/Sorath Harappans in Gujarat to understand the role played by these communities from the Pre Urban Harappan Phase to the Post Urban Harappan Phase through the Urban Harappan Phase. This study is based on the data acquired through explorations carried out by the researcher in different sub-regions of Gujarat followed by its analysis and reanalysis of the existing data generated by various researchers (Sonawane and Mehta 1985; Dhavalikar and Possehl 1992; Shinde and Bhagat-Kar 1992; Herman and Krishnan 1994; Dimri 1994; Sonawane and Ajithprasad 1994; Bhan 1994; Shinde 1998; Ajithprasad 2002; Yadav 2005). Besides, it also incorporates a comparison of the finds of the investigator with those from various excavated sites in Gujarat.

Present State of Research

The beginning of Chalcolithic studies in Gujarat was an upshot of the archaeological discoveries made at Harappa and Mohenjo-daro in modern Pakistan during 1920s. Excavation at Vallabhipur in 1930 by Father Henry Heras marked the beginning of Chalcolithic studies in Gujarat (Anderson and Afonso 1990; Possehl 2008). Other Chalcolithic and Chalcolithic affiliated sites excavated prior to 1947 in Gujarat include Bet Dwarka (Gaur and Sundaresh 2003), Rangpur (Vats 1936; Ghurye 1939; Dikshit 1950; Rao 1963) and Langhnaj (Sankalia 1965). After the partition of India, Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, the urban centers of Indus Valley Civilization along with several other sites became the part of Pakistan leaving two small excavated Harappan sites (Rangpur and Kotla Nihang Khan) in India (Possehl 2002). This motivated various archaeological departments and
institutions to initiate frequent explorations along the northwestern parts of the newly formed India to verify if there are more sites/settlements of the contemporary period. This resulted in the discovery of several Chalcolithic sites (more than 750 in Gujarat) having Harappan affiliation. As most of these sites in Gujarat had elements of Harappan culture, without any doubt or second thought they were labeled under the same and until the first half of 1980s all Chalcolithic settlements of Gujarat were synonymous with the Harappan culture.

Regional Chalcolithic Cultures/Traditions

Excavations at Lothal (Rao 1985), Vagad (Sonawane and Mehta 1985), Nagwada (Hegde et al. 1988), Lotseshwar (Sonawane and Ajithprasad 1994; Bhan 1994), Padri (Shinde 1992 a, 1992 b, 1998; Shinde and Bhagat-Kar 1992) Datrana (Ajithprasad 2002) and Bagasra (Sonawane et al. 2004; Bhan et al. 2004); explorations in North Gujarat and Saurashtra (Sonawane and Ajithprasad 1994; Majumdar 1999; Paul et al. 1997; Paul and Shinde 1998-99; Dimri 1999; Krishnan and Dimri 2005) and re-analysis of ceramics from excavated sites of Saurashtra and North Gujarat (Dhavalikar and Possehl 1992; Herman and Krishnan 1994) clearly indicated the possibility of existence of regional Chalcolithic cultures/traditions represented by Pre-Prabhas Assemblage (3000-2500 BC), Prabhas Ware (2299-1769 BC), Anarta Tradition (3700-1700 BC), Padri Ware (3600-2000 BC), and Micaceous Red Ware (2500-1600 BC) in Gujarat.

Problem of Study

Though, the indigenous Chalcolithic communities existed independently in early stages of Pre Urban Harappan Phase (3700-3000 BC), archaeological data from various excavated sites in Gujarat reveal their coexistence with Pre Urban Harappans, Urban Harappans and Post Urban Harappans. Interestingly, coexistence of various regional cultures in Gujarat with that of different stages of Indus Civilization is not well explained yet. As per the current understanding, cultural relations between Gujarat, Sindh and Baluchistan (Majumdar 1999)
started during later stage of Pre Urban Harappan Phase (circa. 3000 BC). The evidences of these relations are reflected in the burial pottery. However, it is difficult to find the roots of regional cultures within its contemporary cultural communities in Sindh and Baluchistan. At the same time there is lack of evidence to support the origin of indigenous Chalcolithic cultures or traditions within Gujarat. Ceramics, the key artifact of regional Chalcolithic cultures/traditions are different from those of Pre Urban Harappan Burial pottery (Majumdar 1999; Ajithprasad 2002), Sindhi and Sorath Harappan (Possehl 1992) and Post Urban Harappan Phase pottery (Bhan 1992) in Gujarat. In all studies till date, regional cultures/traditions of Gujarat were defined in terms of pottery whereas several other cultural aspects remain undefined. Therefore, it is imperative to have a detailed study in these lines. To understand the regional Chalcolithic cultures/traditions properly, it is necessary to assess their preceding and contemporary cultures; its geographical and chronological extent and characteristic features in Gujarat.

The major objectives of study are:

1. To systematically locate and record sites belonging to regional Chalcolithic cultures through explorations in selected sub-regions.

2. To identify the distribution pattern of indigenous Chalcolithic sites in Gujarat within specific geographical sub-regions.

3. To understand the chronological position of regional cultures/traditions in Gujarat and to reconstruct cultural sequence and regional stratigraphy.

4. To define the nature of regional Chalcolithic settlements and investigate into various aspects of its people and then compare them with various excavated Harappan sites in Gujarat.
Organization of Thesis

The organization of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter briefly introduces the Chalcolithic cultures/traditions of Gujarat. This includes the definition of title, key concepts, scope and meaning of present work. A discussion of the present environmental condition of Gujarat incorporating a detailed account of the geology, geomorphology, soils, drainage pattern, rainfall, climate, mineral resources, flora and fauna will also be presented in this chapter. This will finally define the objectives of thesis.

Chapter 2: Pre Urban Harappan to Post Urban Harappan: An Appraisal

This chapter incorporates a review of Chalcolithic studies in Gujarat since 1930s. The aspects to be discussed here would include a review of various excavations, explorations and a variety of studies conducted in Gujarat during the last 80 years. This chapter will also look into various dating methods employed in Chalcolithic Archaeology of Gujarat; its merits and demerits.

Chapter 3: Methods of Study

This chapter discusses various methods adopted during the study. It incorporates details of exploration techniques, other data collection methods, macroscopic studies and techniques of data analysis. The methods used for the classification and periodization of sites will also form a part of this chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter comprises of three sections and presents the results of explorations,
re-analysis of ceramics and other artifacts from selected excavated sites and its comparison with those of other excavated sites. Different characteristic features of Anarta Tradition, Pre-Prabhas Assemblage, Prabhas Assemblage, Padri Ware and Micaceous Red Ware are discussed. Pottery and other artifacts from Loteshwar, Datrana, Somnath, Padri and Vagad are studied in detail to understand regional Chalcolithic people and recognize the changes underwent by them from the Pre Urban Harappan Phase to the Urban Harappan Phase through the Urban Harappan Phase.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter discusses the data given in the previous chapters with an aim to resolve the objectives of research mentioned in the introductory chapter. In other words, this chapter deals with fixing of chronology, construction of regional stratigraphy, identifying regional elements and defining Chalcolithic cultures/traditions. A general outline of the important observations made from the discussion and significant results of the present work along with future scope for further work are also enumerated under conclusion.

Appendices

Volume Two contains various tables or data that will support the arguments and propositions made in different chapters.

References


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