Chapter 1: Introduction

Harappans are considered as the first urban culture of the Indian sub continent dating back to third millennium BC. They are noted for their town planning, monumental architecture, art, organization of trade and commerce, art of writing, system of weights and measures etc. Their talent and artistic snobbery is reflected on the material culture and no doubt they were superior and ahead of time in their technology and skill. They possessed unique technologies of construction, stone carving, seal cutting, bead making, extraction of metal from ores, production of stone bangles, faience and pottery. They kept the uniqueness and individuality along with superior craftsmanship and quality that made them different from others. Many attempts have been made to compare this culture with the worlds ranking civilizations of ancient time, tried to explain its ancestry and trajectory. But no serious attempt has been done to visualize or understand the nature of urban or degree of urbanization exhibited by the Harappans. The present study entitled “Specialization in Harappan Pottery Production: A Case Study from Gujarat” is an attempt to understand the aspect of Standardization in the Harappan pottery production. Understanding standardization is significant as it proceeds
towards studying craft specialization, which forms an integral part of Indus Urbanization. As far as the material identity of the Harappans are concerned ceramics stand tall in its uniqueness and abundance irrespective of the nature of the site and region. Even though pottery possesses some regional variations, it remains the basic for periodization and explanation of the Harappan culture. So is why ceramics being selected for the present study.

Gujarat is one of the best explored and excavated areas as far as Harappan Culture is concerned. The recent studies brings out a more detailed picture of the Chalcolithic communities of Gujarat and at the same time produce several questions pertaining to the regionality, local development, independent existence etc. Almost all these studies are based on the typology of the ceramics. External features and decorative motifs were given prime importance and based on that several cultures/traditions were established. Most times these traditions were identified in different compartments and shows independent evolution at many excavated sites. No real attempt has been done to evaluate it from a holistic point of view. When one looks at these traditions and ceramic assemblage one can find that these changes and classifications are really minor and are primarily due to the local geology, climate and activities of a particular region. On the whole they all are the same which is reflected materialistically different. So, instead of making classifications over classifications and cultural divisions one has to view the growth or change of culture in a more prolonged way and new modes and methodologies should be developed to understand the changing perspectives. The excavations at Bagasra revealed the existence of Sindhi, Sorath, and Anarta cultural tradition together at one particular site in a stratified context for the first time in Gujarat. Moreover the strategic location and the rich archaeological potential enhance the relevance of the site. In such a context the study of ceramics from a site like Bagasra is crucial in explaining the cultural trajectory of the Harappans in Gujarat, particularly in the Mature Harappan phase. Moreover, no studies have addressed the Indus Urbanization from a typo-technological view.
of ceramics. The study is also significant as it approaches the ceramics from a typo
technological point of view.

Craft specialization, its origin, organization and associated technologies is an
important topic in archaeological research. Specialized production of subsistence
resources and durable craft goods has been viewed as a defining characteristic of
socio-political complexity and its study as key to understand economic and socio-
political structures of complex societies. It could be easily argued that the process
of urbanization or the different stages of development/change of a production
system or organization can be best established by understanding the paradigm of
craft specialization. The word craft can be defined as an art of creation. The social,
economic, political, psychological and environmental factors determine the
working status of a craft. Most archaeological studies attempt to identify
increasing levels of craft specialization as an indicator of increasing social
complexity. It interprets craft specialization as more specialized production which
is supplemented with more standard product. Thus it is viewed as an economizing
behavior best indicated by efficient techniques, standardized products and
increased output (Clark and Parry 1990:293).

The idea of Craft Specialization has got a philosophical interest just before the
industrial revolution. Rousseaeue (1779), AdamSmith (1776), followed by Marx
(1867), Engles (1872), Childe (1950), Harris (1959) and Quigley (1961) proposed
surplus food and leisure time as one of the reason for the origin of specialization.
Adam Smith's idea of connecting degree of specialized craft production with
complex societies is still accepted and the increasing level of specialization is
taking in archaeological studies as the indicator of increasing social complexity
(C.f. Clark and Parry 1990:292). P.M Rice views craft specialization as it is due to a
situation where access to raw material is restricted to a particular social segment
(Rice 1981:220). Adam Smith's classic example of pin factory is a very good
argument towards the understanding of specialization in craft. The introduction of
division of labour resulted in the increase of workman's skill, reduced manufacturing time and increase in output. Individual production increased from 20 pin per craftsman to 48,000 (C.f. Clark and Parry 1990:292). So the specialization is reflected in the way as the increase efficiency in production, and increased output of a standard product. Craftsmen have a responsibility to the society and also a solid backing from the factors of production. It is benefited through the symbiotic relationship between the craftman or producer and the general public or consumer.

The present study deals with the ceramics from Bagasra (Gola Dhora), a Mature Harappan site located in the eastern extremity of Gulf of Kachchh in Maliya Taluka, Rajkot District, Gujarat State. The site is located at a strategic point connecting Kachchh, North Gujarat, and Saurashtra, the three major cultural regions of Gujarat and shows distinct cultural traits of Sindhi, Sorath and Anarta in the Chalcolithic times (Sonawane et.al. 2003). The present study attempts to understand the specialization reflected in archaeological ceramics at Bagasra in order to understand the nature and degree of specialization of the Harappans of Gujarat in general and at the site in particular. The study deals with the ceramics in a typo-technological point of view. An investigation will be done on the technique of ceramic manufacture of the Harappans, provenance of the clay, and the organization of production and distribution. The study will deal with a model towards explaining the craft specialization and it will be tested over the archaeological samples from Bagasra.

Major objectives of the research are

1. Define the different ceramic traditions at Bagasra typologically
2. Identify the development of ceramic manufacture at Bagasra in relation with its sequence
3. Identify the provenance, technique of manufacturing and distribution pattern of the Harappan ceramics at the site
4. Attempt to recognize the similarities/differences between Sorath and Sindhi Harappan Ceramics

5. Identify the degree of specialization in ceramic production at Bagasra

6. Compare the results with major studied sites like Nageshwar (Krishnan 1986), Nagwada (Shah 2001) and Padri (Bhagat 2000) to appreciate the level of standardization in Harappan ceramic production

7. A proposed model for understanding specialization in archaeological ceramics.

Here, the study is investigating into the concept of specialization which is seldom approached through archaeological ceramics. Hence, the topic has a philosophical stand than a materialistic one that needs to be investigated differently from the traditional way of recording and analysis. Typology has been considered for analysis as it provides a relative chronology of the site and samples and also helps in ordering the ceramics for any type of analysis. Thus typology provides a base for all analysis. In order to understand the technology of manufacture and provenance of the raw material thin section analysis has been opted. Further an ethnographic analysis has also been carried out around the study area in order to get an idea about the local geology, site formation and local traditions existing around the site. After considering the visible and recordable attributes which may reflect the skill and organization of the potters, a morpho-metric analysis was also included in the study. Thus a combination of four major methods has been considered for the analysis.

This study is presented here in six chapters. Chapter I deals with the significance of the research work. It discusses the background of study, its significance and the major objectives and the ideas used in formulating the research problem. Chapter II deals with the methods adopted for study. It includes the nature of the samples, strategies adopted for sampling and justification for selection of the methods for analysis. Here, a combination of four methods have been considered for analysis.
and justified the selection through arguments. They are the Typological analysis, Thin-section analysis, Morphometric analysis and an Ethnographic study. Each method has been dealt individually and explains their technical constraints. Chapter III contains a review of the major ceramic studies in Indian subcontinent. It may further converse the present status of the Harappan studies. The chapter emphasizes the significance of such studies in developing a better understanding of Harappan culture. It includes a detailed discussion on the Harappan culture in Gujarat with special reference to Bagasra. For the ease of working and better understanding of the site, the study followed the Phase wise division which is based on the differences in architecture and antiquities. Chapter IV exclusively deals with the ceramic analysis and its results mainly in four parts. Part I deals with the typological analysis, that do an ordering of the samples and device a relative chronology for the samples and the site and a base for further analysis. Part II is the thin section analysis where representative samples subjected to a microscopic thin section analysis and their results. Part III is an ethnographic study around the site and the last part deal with a morpho metric analysis of the selected samples from Bagasra. Chapter V contains a discussion of the result of the analysis. It discusses the typological aspects of the ceramics in comparison with the thin section analysis. The chapter will further evaluate the validity of the ethnographic exercise and its application in archaeological samples from Bagasra. An attempt has been made to see the specialization reflected in the archaeological ceramics at Bagasra and tried to define the concept and parameters of specialization. Here, the relationship between specialist, standardization, the context of production and raw material processing techniques and the role of environment in making a quality final product has been discussed. Chapter VI concludes the major results and validity of the model and its applicability in archaeological context. The result of the analysis is compared with the results from sites like Nageshwar, Nagwada and Padri in order to appreciate the level of Specialization/Standardization in Harappan ceramic production.
References


