

KOT DIJI



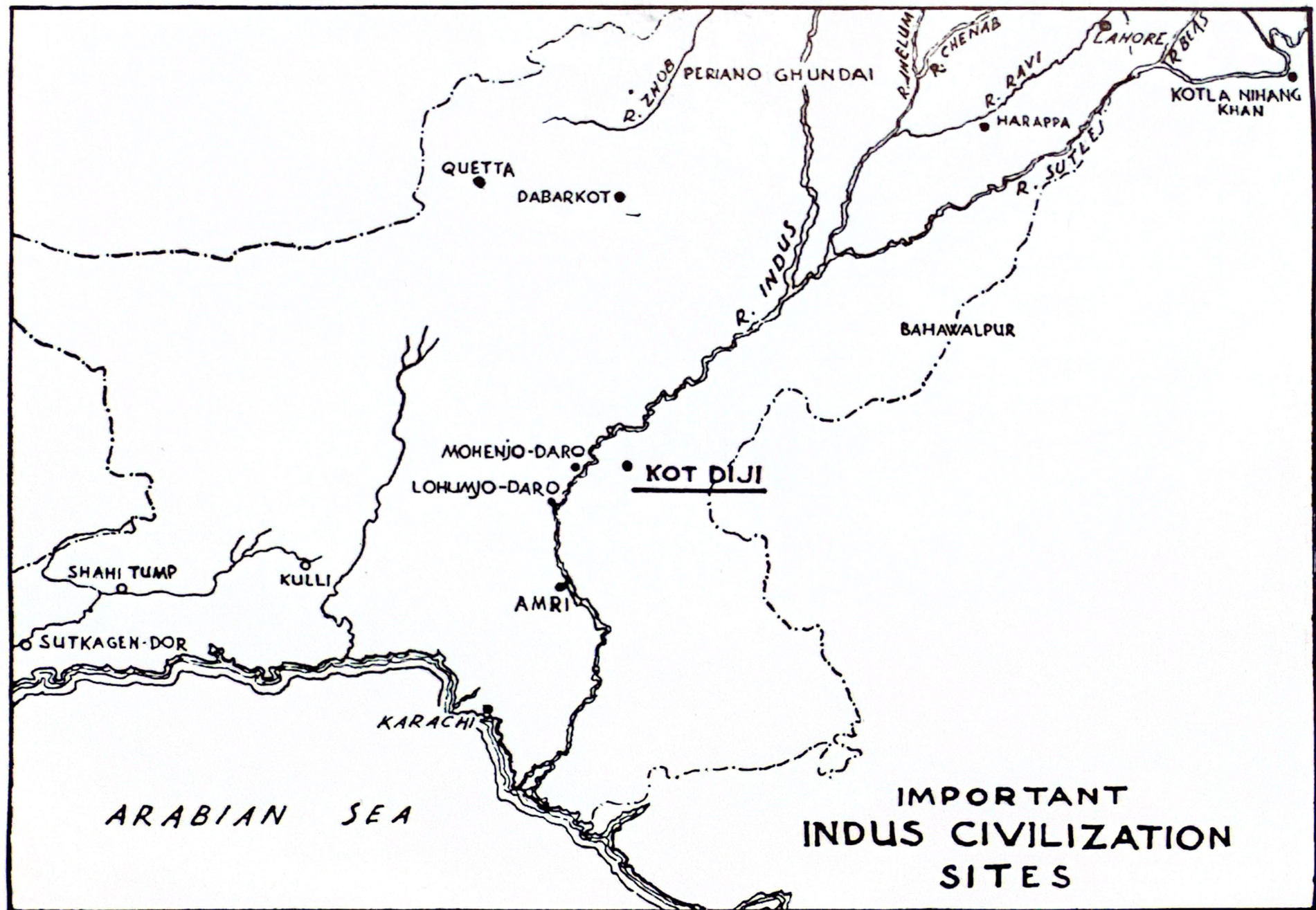
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY—PAKISTAN

35
17245

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON
KOT DIJI
EXCAVATIONS

1957—58

By
Dr. F. A. KHAN
*Director of Archaeology in
Pakistan*



THE original picture of pre-Aryan inhabitants of the Indus Valley we have from ancient sources is that of godless, lawless, and noseless 'rakshasa' of hostile speech. But after 1920, when the archaeological excavations were started at the Indus Valley sites of Harappa and Moenjo Daro, it became evident that a civilization possessing a high standard of art and craftsmanship and a well-developed system of writing had existed for a considerable period before the arrival of the Indo-Aryans. Unlike the Indo-Aryan invaders who still remain archaeologically unidentifiable, and whose date of arrival in the north-west of the sub-continent is as yet unknown, the excavations at Harappa and Moenjo Daro revealed a mass of archaeological material and furnished considerable information about the material civilization of these early inhabitants.



Stone structures at Kot-Diji, in layers 2 and 5, fire-place in layer 4, and bed-rock in the foreground. The large kiln in the background is in layer 2.

Excavated areas of the lower city in the foreground, the citadel in the background, and part of the defensive system in the centre.

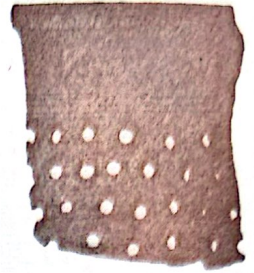
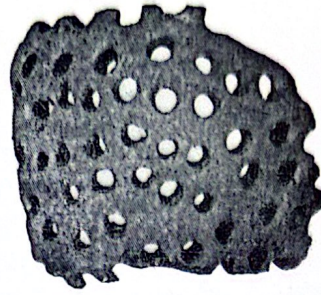
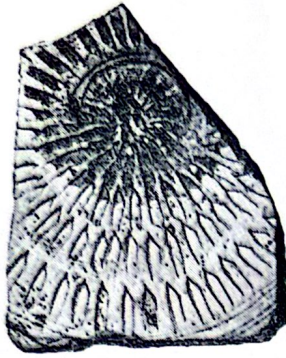


This civilization—unique and mature in many respects—was contemporary in part with the Mesopotamian civilization of 2300 B.C. The early stages of this civilization however could not be unravelled since digging was not possible in the water-logged lower levels at Moenjo Daro. Whatever its origin, these excavations did establish that it had already flourished for a considerably long period in the Indus Valley.

After these epoch-making discoveries, several more intensive investigations were carried out at Harappa, Moenjo Daro and other sites during the last three decades, but nothing was added—at least nothing of notable significance beyond a few more details—to our knowledge of that well-developed civilization of extraordinary interest.

Early Moenjo Daro Culture Unravelled

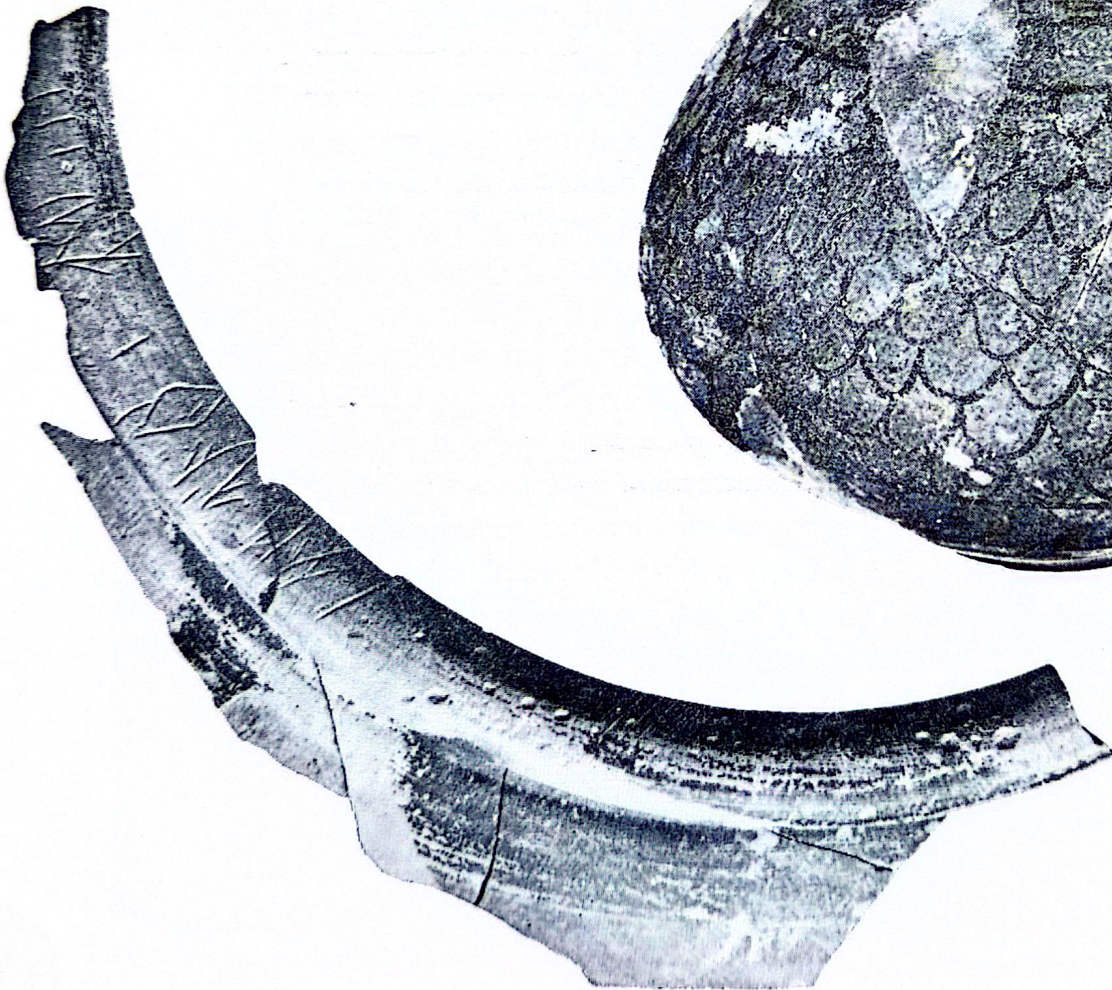
Recently, excavations at Kot Diji revealed for the first time the early Moenjo Daro culture pottery and other objects. This pottery which is of great significance provides a very interesting study. It seems that the Moenjo Daro culture at this stage, as shown by some of the painted pottery specimens, represents the early phases of that remarkable civilization, when though the normal Harappa-Moenjo Daro forms of pottery were developed, decoration in black-on-red remained still uncommon. No complex designs such as the intersecting circles and the 'pipal' leaf motif of the typical matured Harappa-Moenjo Daro phases are found in these levels. In fact, the only recognizable painted designs of early phases include the representation of antelopes with hatched bodies, a crudely painted peacock, and the stylized 'fish-scale' pattern. The typical deep-red glossy slip had not yet properly developed; it is fugitive and is easily washed off. This pottery clearly



1

1. *Incised and perforated Pottery pieces, Harappa levels.*
2. *Neck of Jar with inscriptions: Harappa levels.*
3. *Jar painted with fish-scale pattern, Kot-Diji levels.*

2



3

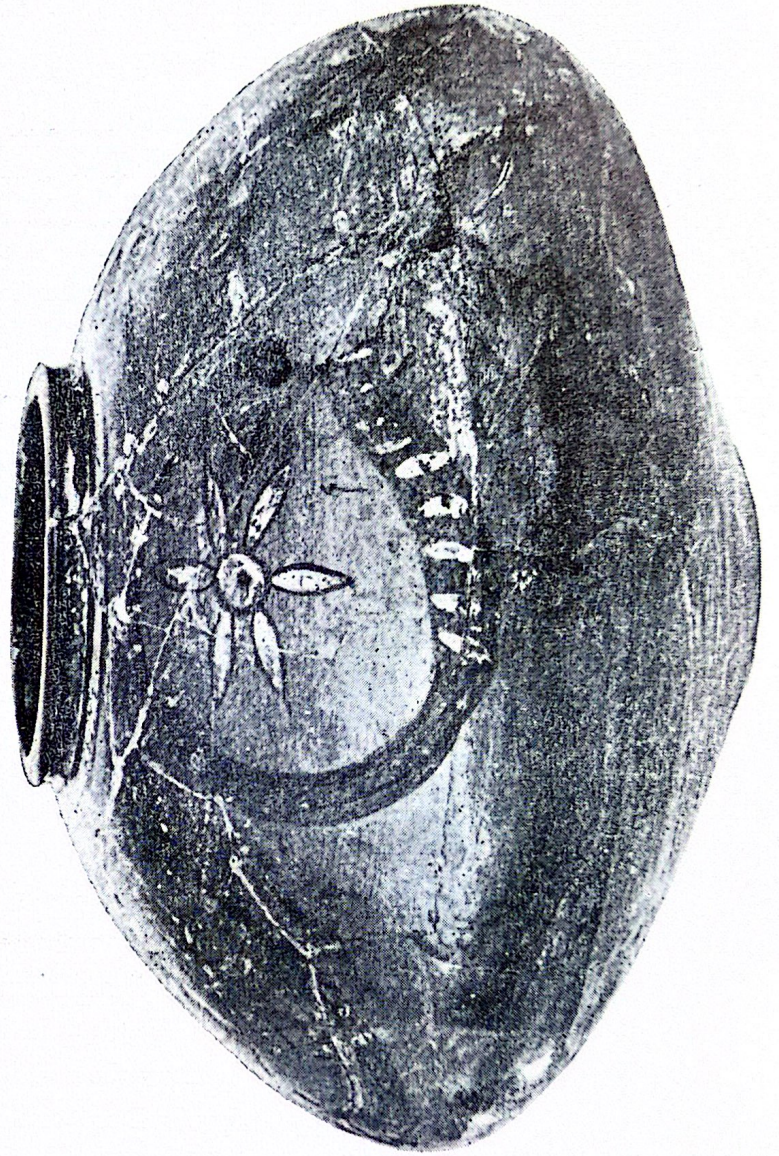
demonstrates that it must have been linked with the earliest phases of the Harappa-Moenjo Daro civilization. This early period ceramic could not be recovered from the water-logged lower levels at Moenjo Daro and other sites of the Harappa culture. Fortunately at Kot Diji that problem does not exist, and excavations have clearly shown that the early Moenjo Daro settlement was built over the remains of the Kot Dijians, the original settlers of the site on bed-rock. These early phases may antedate the well-developed Harappan-Moenjo Daro phases, dated 2300 B.C., by as much as two hundred years, and thereby date the beginning of that culture to about 2500 B.C.

Location and Excavations

Kot Diji site is situated 15 miles south of Khairpur town and north of Diji Fort on the highway to Hyderabad. The main axis of the site runs east to west and measures some 600 feet in length; the width is more than 400 feet and the height from the surrounding field level about 40 feet.

The site had been subjected to heavy depredation and both earth and stones had been removed for use elsewhere.

Excavation work at Kot Diji was first started in November 1955. It lasted for a brief period of one month, but the results were very encouraging. Not only the life and culture of a small outlying station of the Moenjo Daro civilization situated in the heart of a vast agricultural plain was revealed to some extent, but a new cultural element was also observed in the lower levels. The first excavation being restricted could not throw sufficient light on the relation of this new element with the Harappa-Moenjo Daro civilization, and work had therefore to be resumed last year from the middle of October,



2

3

1

and it continued till the end of December.

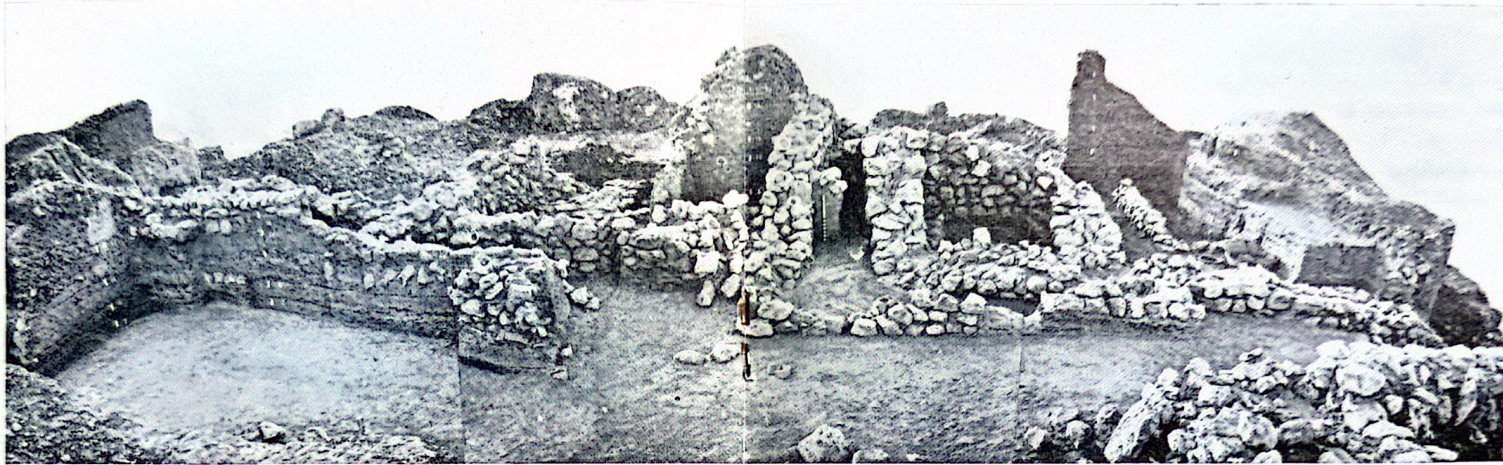
Citadel

The Kot Diji site consists of two parts: one, comprising the citadel area, measures some 500 feet by 350 feet with a height of 40 feet; the other, the outer part of the city which must have been inhabited by the artisan classes extended far beyond. In the upper levels of the citadel, properly-orientated spacious rooms with stone foundations and mud-brick superstructures have been uncovered. The roofs, which were probably flat and were covered with mud plastered reed mats, have all perished. Mud-brick paved floors with pottery pots and pans, large storage jars, and innumerable antiquities such as children's toy carts, balls and marbles; bangles and beads in baked clay and stone; baked pottery figurines of mother-goddess and animals; bronze arrow-heads and well-fashioned stone implements have been found. The discovery of large-size community ovens in some of the houses indicates a regularized life and division of labour. In the lower levels were found massive walls of sun-dried bricks. In certain cases, the width of the walls is more than 5 feet.

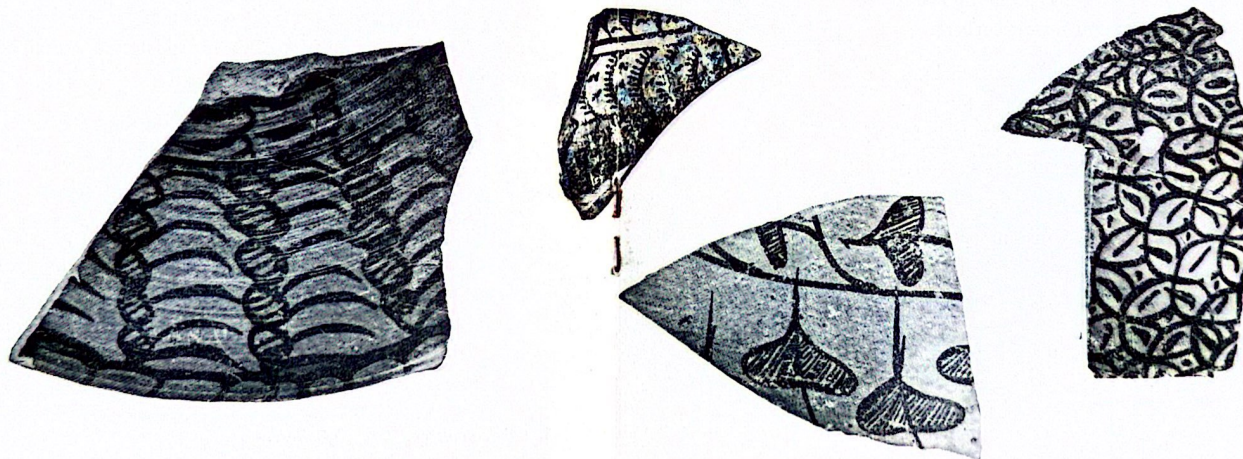
Defensive Wall

The most impressive structural feature of Kot Diji site is the pre-Moenjo Daro defensive wall of the citadel. It is of considerable height and width. It was raised on bed-rock and built below with undressed stone blocks, and above with mud bricks. Clearance has revealed on the northern and eastern sides the regular courses of large stone blocks properly set with mud mortar. That its inner stone face was not plastered with mud was observed when digging down in the north-east sector from top to bottom on the inside. Internally it slanted at an

- ←
1. *Painted pottery, Harappa Culture.*
 2. *Stone implement, Harappa culture.*
 3. *Water pitcher painted with a horned deity, Kot-Diji level.*



Harappa levels 1 to 2 with stone structures, lanes and pottery in Situ, Citadel Area.



Pieces of pottery with plant and palpal leaf motif, unearthed at Kot Diji, Harappa levels.

angle of $8\frac{1}{2}$ degrees, and was re-enforced in the north-east corner with $2\frac{1}{2}$ foot wide stone revetment bonded with foundation courses. Externally, it was strengthened with bastions at regular intervals. One such bastion with complex arrangement has been revealed in the north-east corner; its length is 32 feet and width 20 feet. The outer face of the fortification wall was revetted with mud-bricks. On the eastern side the wall takes an inward turn, and joins with a massive stone structure which must have been a screen wall.

At its base the fortification wall had considerable thickness. Its height including the mud-brick superstructure, as far as preserved, varies from 12 to 14 feet—the stone sub-structure is 10 feet in height and the mud-brick part above it is about 2 feet in height.

On the northern side the wall has been cleared to a length of 108 feet and is found standing to a height of $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet. Its western and southern wings have suffered considerable damage owing to depredations, but evidence of what appear to be bastions is available in the south-east and south-west corners.

The occupation levels revealed from top to bottom indicate that the inner habitation areas were very near to the citadel wall; it served as the back part of most of the houses. In the last stage of its history the fortification wall fell into disuse, and the Kot Dijians used its top for occupation purposes.)

The citadel associated with the Kot Dijian pottery represents the earliest fortified town in the sub-continent. It must have been built by a well-organized community, otherwise it would be difficult to account for the heavy labour which the construction of this massive defensive wall must have involved.

Pottery

The Kot Dijians manufactured a pottery of pleasing design and shape which is of considerable interest. It is wheel-made; its clay is well levigated, its paste and ground varies from pinkish to red colour. The decoration consists mainly of wide bands at the neck of vessels in red, brown and sepia; other decorative elements include 'fish scale' pattern, loops and wavy lines in black, and a complex design in black and white portraying a horned deity. It is one of the most rare and well-developed designs of the Kot Dijian pottery, distinct and unique in every respect. This design is hitherto unknown on the pottery of the ancient cultures of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent. The principal pottery-forms include dish-on-stands; open mouthed globular jars with short rim and flat base; straight walled and wide-mouthed cylindrical vessels. Associated with these forms are the flat-based plates of thin grey fabric. The miniature pottery-forms include handled cups, beakers and vases.

Comparison between Kot Diji and Harappa-Moenjo Daro Pottery

[Except for a few forms and simple decorative motifs, there is hardly any important form or pattern common to the pottery of both Moenjo Daro and Kot Dijian cultures.] The strongest point of contrast is the difference in technique. The [Kot Dijian ware is very light and thin, the Moenjo Daro black-on-red is thick and heavy.] In fact, the contrast in texture, form and decoration between the normal Moenjo Daro pottery and the Kot Dijian ware [is so well-marked as to indicate a basic difference of ceramic industry.] Its affinities appear to exist to some extent in the pre-Harappan levels

below the defences at Harappa, and in early levels at Amri. The ceramic ware of the Kot Dijians though different in texture, form and decoration from the Moenjo Daro culture pottery is not crude, but quite mature and well-developed in its own style. In addition to wide bands in different shades, other decorative elements include simple thin horizontal lines combined with single or multiple loops and wavy lines.

Kot Dijians: Forerunners of Moenjo Daro People

Further studies are being made before any definite conclusion can be reached about the borrowing or retention of some of the pottery forms and the decorative elements of this fascinating ceramic industry of the Kot Dijians by the people of Moenjo Daro.

But indications are strong that the authors of the new type of pottery, were the forerunners of the Moenjo Daro people in many respects. Though different in form and technique, their ceramic products are in no way less artistic than the highly sophisticated black-on-red pottery of Harappa-Moenjo Daro people.

The discovery of a new type of pottery with a unique decoration together with an individual colour scheme and unusual forms, strengthens our view that it belonged to a culture alien to and earlier than the Harappa-Moenjo Daro culture. Its parallels, except at Harappa below the defences, at other sites in the Indus Valley and Baluchistan are yet to be found; it seems to have appeared on the scene in a developed style.

Kot Dijian Way of Life

The inhabitants who owned this well-finished ceramic used fine stone implements, lived in dwellings of sun-dried bricks built on stone foundations: their womenfolk bedecked

themselves with beads and bangles of shell and terracota, and their children possessed toys like stone and baked-clay balls and marbles, miniature clay pots and cowrie shells. (There is no conclusive proof as to the region from where the Kot Dijians arrived in the Indus Valley. This much is certain that their ceramic product was well-distributed—some of its forms with straight or everted rim and with the characteristic bands at the neck were found at Harappa in 1946.)

Other Finds: Stone Implements, Arrow Heads etc.

Stone implements found in abundance show great merit. The majority of them are cores of flakes from which blades, scrapers, spear-heads and sickle-like blades had been chipped. Most of them show signs of use on their edges. The well-finished leaf-shaped stone arrow-heads are worth mentioning. Only three arrow-heads are known to have been found previously from Baluchistan and Sind, but no such specimens have ever been discovered outside the Indus Valley in the sub-continent.

A baked-clay figurine of a bull with well-developed body, stout muzzle and short pointed horns is of great interest. In style it is unlike the bull figurines discovered from the Indus Valley and Baluchistan sites. It bears resemblance to the representation of a bull depicted on Susa scarlet pottery in south-west Iran dated 2800-2700 B.C. The Kot Diji specimen seems to be the earliest perfect example of plastic art.]

A very interesting aspect of the discoveries made at Kot Diji is the large number of plain and painted bangles; other minor objects include beads, balls, marbles and pottery discs used in games. The bangles were in pottery and shell, the beads with incised decoration are in baked clay. Marbles

were played by children, but some of the well-finished specimens seem too good to have been used by children. Terracotta model cakes are also there. A number of carrot-shaped pottery cones are difficult to explain; they are said to be spindles. In Mesopotamia, they were used for decorating the walls.

Fire and Floods

[In the upper levels of the citadel, a thick deposit of charred material spreads over the entire excavated area. It may reasonably be assumed that this burnt layer did not represent an accidental fire but a violent conflagration which engulfed and destroyed the settlement of the Kot Dijians, and paved the way for the people of Harappa-Moenjo Daro culture.]

[In the lower levels of the outer city, traces of burnt material and ashy layers are also noticeable more or less uniformly over a large area. It has been observed that the pottery of the Kot Dijians appears predominantly below this burnt layer, and above it is early Harappa-Moenjo Daro culture material. This break in cultural continuity both in the citadel and the outer city together with intensive burning, makes it reasonable to assume that the settlement underwent a great disturbance and probably total destruction at the hands of the Harappans.]

[On the southern side of the lower city a thick deposit of clean sand is observed in lower levels. It appears probable, as indicated by the slope of the bed-rock as well as the present physiognomy of the area, that in ancient times a stream, flowing this side of the site and the hill underneath the Diji Fort could have caused occasional floods, as a result of which a thick sandy layer was deposited over early-period occupations. At this level, in one of the trenches huge limestone blocks have been unearthed which were evidently piled up there to check /

the rush of flood waters.

Moenjo Daro and Kot Diji Chronology

[Several finds from Moenjo Daro are assignable to more or less definite dates before and after 2350 B.C., because of their affinity with objects found on other sites in Western Asia; while excavations in Mesopotamia yielded seals and other typical Harappa-Moenjo Daro culture products in strata dated to 2350 B.C., the time of Sargon of Agade.] Certain objects are especially noteworthy: cylinder seals of Mesopotamian type, but showing animals peculiar to the Indus region, namely elephant, rhinoceros and crocodile; seals depicting horned deities, also comparable with deities known from Mesopotamia knobbed ware, a typical Harappa-Moenjo Daro product found also at Tell Asmar; a fragment of a vessel of light green steatite with a mat pattern, a type found in Mesopotamia and elsewhere on sites of the third millennium B.C., and later in Egypt; etched beads of cornelian segmented paste beads; disc beads with tubular hole as discovered in Mesopotamia; rings of shell inlay and stone incised-ware as found in Makran and Mesopotamia.

[These parallels do not necessarily indicate anything more than a trade connection. They are important because they give dating evidence and suggest that the Harappa-Moenjo Daro culture was flourishing before 2350 B.C., and onwards. The initial date is based on the Mesopotamian parallels of the Early Dynastic III period, c. 2400 B.C.]

[If the links between the Harappa-Moenjo Daro culture and the Sumerian civilization are simply due to trade and do not point to a common origin, the discovery of the Harappa-Moenjo Daro culture is even more significant because

it reveals a high level of civilization which developed to perfection in the Indus Valley, and was not merely borrowed from outside.}]

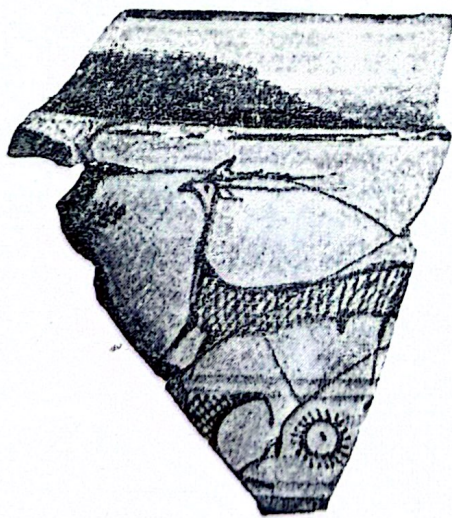
It seems probable that the Harappa-Moenjo Daro people did come into the Indus Valley with a fairly well-developed culture from somewhere else, since no traces of origin of that culture have been revealed by excavations at any of the sites of the Indus Valley, especially sites like Harappa and Kot Diji, where water-logging problem does not exist, and where early Harappa-Moenjo Daro pottery had been found in certain levels in a well defined stratified layer above a distinct ceramic product.

The plain and painted Harappa-Moenjo Daro pottery unearthed from layers above Kot Dijian pottery levels clearly indicates the early stages of the former ware, when decoration still remained crude and restricted, and the red slip was fugitive and not fast and bright as in the matured phases. These early stages may antedate the well-developed Harappa-Moenjo Daro phases of upper levels at Kot Diji site by as much as two hundred years and thereby date the beginning of Harappa-Moenjo Daro culture to c. 2500 B.C.

Another seven hundred Years Added to History

Although now we know that at Kot Diji (before the arrival of Harappa-Moenjo Daro people there flourished a well-settled community of highly efficient people for a considerable length of time, whose ruling classes lived in a fortified citadel in houses of sun-dried bricks; who manufactured tools and implements of stone; who were highly skilled in the art of pottery making—there is no knowledge of their racial and linguistic affinities.}]

Their highly developed pottery seems to belong to the same group of ceramic product to which perhaps belonged the Amri ware and the pottery specimens discovered below the defences at Harappa. A case can be made for seeing in some of the pre-Harappan and Amri forms a probable likeness of Kot Dijian pottery, and if that be admitted then the well-shaped, carefully finished Kot Dijian ceramic need not be later than the early Harappa-Moenjo Daro pottery discovered at Kot Diji and assigned to the middle of the third millennium c. 2500 B.C. This of course, would make the Kot Diji 'ensemble' considerably early in time, round about 3000 B.C., by no means an improbable conclusion. In other words our knowledge of the ancient history of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent goes back by another seven hundred years, that is from 2300 to 3000 B.C. But it must be remembered that this is a provisional dating, and has to be confirmed by further investigations. However, this much can be said that the eleven occupation levels of the Kot Dijians might represent 500 to 600 years of a uniform ceramic industry, on the same analogy as the six building phases at Harappa and the ten occupation levels at Moenjo Daro are regarded the product of five to eight centuries.



Pottery with antelope and sun symbol, Harappa Culture.



Pottery with peacock and fish-scale pattern, Harappa Culture.

Published by
The Department of Archaeology
Govt. of Pakistan, Karachi.

Ferozsons, Karachi.