

Archaeological Findings and Structural Remains Recovered from Jalalabad Block of District Fazilka, Punjab: An Archaeological Assessment

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Abstract: In the present study, we have reconstructed the history of the Jalalabad block based on the archaeological findings recovered from this region during a systematic exploration. During this exploration, a total of eight archaeological sites were explored. All these sites are different from the previously reported sites of the region. The analytical and morphological analysis of archaeological remains revealed that these sites belong to the early historical as well as early medieval period.

Keywords: Jalalabad, Archaeological, Exploration, Cultural, Early historical, Early Medieval

Introduction

Fazilka district is one of the major districts of Punjab state. It was established on 27 July 2011. Earlier, it was a part of Firozpur district. Fazilka district is located in the south-west direction of Punjab state. Its latitudinal extension is from 29°40' to 30°50' north latitude and its longitudinal extension is from 73°81' to 74°61' east longitude (DDMP 2019:11). Its area is 3113 square kilometres (Census Report District Firozpur 2011). There are 313 villages in this district. Being a border district, adequate development of transport routes has been done keeping in mind its strategic importance. From the road point of view, the district is situated on National Highway-10, which connects Fazilka district to Delhi via Abohar, Hisar. From the railway point of view, it has been included in the Northern

Division of Indian Railways. It is situated on the Fazilka-Bathinda-Rewari railway line. Amritsar International Airport and Ludhiana Domestic Airport are located at a distance of 220 kilometres from the district headquarters (Population Report District Firozpur 2011, DDMP 2019:14). The distance from the district headquarters to the state capital Chandigarh is 316 kilometres. Fazilka district is divided into five blocks of one is Jalalabad. Jalalabad block was named after Nawab Jalaluddin Khan, son of Mamdot Nawab Qutubuddin, who made Jalalabad his capital.

Location

In this paper, the Jalalabad block of district Fazilka located in the south-west direction of Punjab state has been selected, which is also a tehsil and block of the district at the administrative level. The latitudinal extension of the Jalalabad block is from 30°42'5" to 30°63'92" North latitude and the longitudinal extension is from 74°07'93" to 74°39'48" east (DDMP 2019, MSME 2016-17, District Gazetteer Firozpur 1983). The western boundary of Jalalabad block shares the border between India and Pakistan. Firozpur district is situated on the northern and north-eastern boundary. Fazilka block is situated in the south-west direction and Srimuktsar Sahib district is situated in the south-eastern direction (District Gazetteer Firozpur 1983, Census Report District Firozpur 2011). Jalalabad block is situated at a distance of 34 kilometres from the district headquarters. The block is connected to the district by road and rail. State Highway 20 connects the block to the district headquarters. Due to the availability of road transport, the block is connected to other towns and cities of the state. The number of villages is 106 and spread over an area of 910 square kilometres. The main river of Jalalabad block is Sutlej. This river flows through the northern and north-western parts of Jalalabad block. This area also makes the border between India and Pakistan.

Previous Work

The first exploratory mission of the undivided Firozpur district was done by Madhubala ji, and as a result, these eight ancient sites were identified. Out of these eight, two archaeological sites come under the present Fazilka district, which are Araniwala and Lakhowali (Madhubala 1975-76, 248). Three cultural strata were identified from Araniwala which are related to Pre-Harappan, Harappan and historical periods respectively. Only one cultural strata is reported from Lakhowali which belongs to the early historical period. Again a survey of 65 villages of the undivided Firozpur district, which included present-day Fazilka, was done by the ASI Chandigarh Circle in 2007-08. During this, the only site is traced in Haripura village of Abohar block at 30°8'N, 72°2'E which is related to the historical period (IAR 2007-08, 98-99). Again a survey was conducted by the ASI Chandigarh Circle in 2011-12. This survey was based on the village-to-village survey method. During this survey, an archaeological mound and five British-period buildings were reported in the present research area. This archaeological mound is located in Marukwala village at 30°33'N, 74°10'E. It is situated 30 kilometres northeast of the district headquarters and 10 kilometres from the block headquarters.

Historical Outline

Fazilka (including Jalalabad) was established in 1844 AD by a British officer named Van Agnew. He built a bungalow here to conduct administrative work, as a result, it came to be called Bangla, but after two years, Oliver established some shops here and its nomination was changed to Fazilka in the name of Lambardar Fazil Vattu (Census Report District Firozpur. 2011:3, DSRDF 2016:17).

During 1856 the Fazilka Regiment of Native Infantry rebelled against the British Empire but the authorities took timely action and suppressed the rebellion (Census Report District Firozpur 2011). Fazilka was included under Firozpur in 1884 (MSME 2016- 17:2). The municipality was formed here on 10 December 1885 under the British Raj. A railway was built here for the first time in 1898 AD, on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria of England (FCP 2021:6). During 1908, rains caused severe devastation in this area and also damaged historical buildings (DDMP 2019). Being a border district, the district had to face the horrors of two India-Pakistan wars which took place in 1965 and 1971 respectively (DDMP 2019:11). At present Fazilka district is a Hindu majority area (Census Report District Firozpur 2011:10). From cultural and tourism point of view, Badda Lake and Clock Tower are prominent in the district (FCP 2021: 8, Census Report District Firozpur 2011: 10). A Clock Tower is built on Mughal British architectural style, Which was constructed in 1939. Before the partition of India and Pakistan, the district was a major centre of trade, but after the partition, its importance declined due to the transfer of raw material areas to Pakistan and the development of Bikaner city. Due to its location in the Indus-Ganga plain, agriculture is the main source of livelihood of the people here.

Geographical and Geological Features

Jalalabad block comes under the subtropical climatic zone. Summers in this region are generally hot and winters are cold (DSRDF 2016:2). Rainfall in the region occurs during the south-west monsoon. In this block, there is a diversity of flora and fauna.

Jalalabad block comes under the Great Plains of North India which is also known as the Indus-Ganga Plains. The plain of this block is formed mainly by the Indus and its tributaries, out of which the Sutlej River is prominent. In Punjab, this plain is also known as Malwa Plain. (Oxford Atlas 2020:12). This alluvial plain has been formed as a result of the process of Pleistocene and recent sedimentation (Wadia 1953:385, RL Singh 1971:83). The thickness of alluvial soil varies at different places in the study area.

The thickness of the plain gradually decreases towards the south and only in the south direction it is visible as a thin layer. The heterogeneity of alluvium depends on the time of its formation and this basis it is divided into two classes. The soil formed in the Quaternary period, which is called ancient alluvium, is made up of a proportionate mixture of clay, gravel, sand, clay silt and pebbles. The ancient alluvial area is also called Bangar, which was formed in the middle and upper Pleistocene period (Wadia 1953: 391, Khullar 2014: 49). The quantity of sand particles is also seen from south and south-west to north-east direction of Jalalabad which is due to wind erosion and deposition (District Gazetteer Firozpur 1983: 8). This process has been going on continuously for a long time.

Within the second category comes a new alluvium which is called Khadar. It was formed in the upper Pleistocene period as a result of the deposition of soil carried by the rivers in the low-lying areas (Wadia 1953:392, Khullar 214:49). The Northern and north-western part of Jalalabad comes under the Khadar plain which is formed from the sediments carried by the Sutlej river. As a result of deposition, clay loamy soil is found here which is good for agriculture activities.

Research Methodology

In archaeology, there are two methods for data collection which are exploration and excavation. Here the researcher used the exploration method to identify the new sites and archaeological remains. For

the proper visibility of data on the surface of the mound and in rain gullies the rainy season is selected. The main reason behind this the antiquities came out on the surface and in rain gullies due to the erosion of the mound by water.

A handheld GPS is used to record the geo-coordinates of the site. For the photographs of archaeological sites and structural remains, a high-resolution digital camera is used. Arch- GIS software is used for plotting the sites on the map with accuracy. The extent of the site is determined based on the diffusion of archaeology remains. For the identification of pottery and dating of Structural remains typological method is used.

Exploration

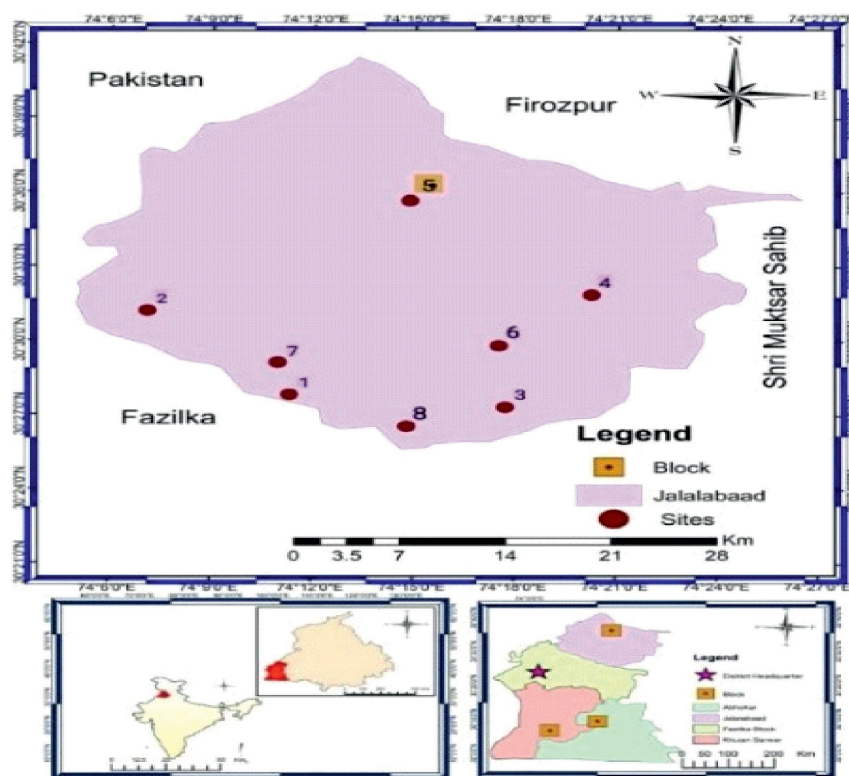


Fig. 1: Jalalabad boundary map with Archaeological site location, Point-1 is Multicultural (E. Historical and E. Medieval) Points 2 to 8 are E. Medieval

Archaeological exploration provides important information about the history and culture of a particular area. There are different methods of exploration, out of which is a village-to-village survey method. Before conducting a survey, it is necessary to obtain information about the literature and published research works of any area. The above information is useful for preparing the research design and knowing about the ancient cultures that existed thousands of years ago. There are two important methods for obtaining antiquities from ancient sites and understanding the activities of the past, out of which survey is an important method which observes, and records human activities of ancient archaeological sites and collects pottery and other cultural materials obtained from the surface. Through the survey, social, economic, religious, political and cultural aspects are thrown by analysing the cultural material obtained from ancient archaeological sites. Cultural antiquities not only provide information about the existence of archaeology but also throw light on cultural order. Archaeological

survey is a process that provides a vivid picture of ancient cultures. Based on archaeological material obtained from the survey, different aspects of different cultures or societies like cultural customs, and settlement areas. The main objective of the archaeological survey is to know the relationship between human behaviour and cultural material.

In this research paper, the Jalalabad block of Fazilka district having 106 villages was surveyed. The main objective of this survey was to obtain primary data and antiquities in the context of archaeological sites located in this area and also to study the antiquities systematically. As a result of the survey, eight archaeological sites have been reported. Out of eight archaeological sites, one archaeological site Nukaria is multi-cultural. Nukeria site belongs to the early Historical and early medieval period. The remaining seven archaeological sites belong to the Early Medieval Period, these sites are; Hauzkhas, Tarawali, Hauz alis gander, Khuranj, Chack Ghulam Rasulwala, Chack Dhab Khushal Zoya and Hamid Saheedo Ka.

Highlighted Ceramics

The characteristics of pottery of different stages of the period have been highlighted. Sketches of pottery found in the survey are also shown.

Early Historic Period Pottery Tradition

The pottery of the early historical period is mainly red. In the present survey, we have received small fragments of red and grey coloured pottery from the Nukeria archaeological site of Jalalabad. The pottery of this period was completely made of chalk. The texture of these vessels is mainly thin to medium. Among the pottery shapes, bowls and basins with inwards inclined edges are prominent.

Early Medieval Pottery Tradition



Fig. 2 and 3 Pottery from Archaeological sites

During the survey, mostly red-coloured pottery was found in the early medieval sites from Jalalabad block. This pottery is made of well-kneaded clay and is made on a high-speed wheel. This pottery is of medium to excellent quality. The main types of pottery are pitchers, knife-edged bowls, fluted pots, saucers, and collection vessels, there is a lack of lids, hinged lids etc. The pottery of this period is painted black and some red on both the inside and outside. On the outer part of the pottery, parallel horizontal stripes, wavy lines, white coloured dots between the thick black stripes, wavy lines, triangles between the horizontal lines, criss-cross lines, and a series of vertical and oblique lines are seen. Parallel horizontal lines and wavy designs are also found on the internal parts of some pottery.

Baked Clay Structural Remains

At the time of the archaeological survey in the study area, the researcher found baked clay structural remains from the archaeological sites of Hameed Saheedok and Chak Ghulam Rasool Wala. Baked mud bricks are prominent among these structural remains. The length, width and height of the baked clay bricks found from the ancient site of Hamid Saheedok are 34, 23.5 and 6 centimetres respectively, on which the shape of a horseshoe is marked. Along with this, some such structures with carvings made of baked clay have been found. Which has been used in



Fig. 4 and 5 Hamid Sahido ke mound and brick remains

The Amalek and entrance gate of the early medieval temples of the Gurjar Pratihara period at Kalayat (Kaithal). Based on the similarity of these structures, researchers can say that there might have been a temple here in the early medieval period. But at present the structural remains of this ancient site have been disturbed by local people (dev:2022,54).



Fig. 6, 7 and 8 Structural remains from Hamid Sahido ke site

From Chak Ghulam Rasool Wala, another early medieval archaeological site, researchers found the remains of a Burj. Which is still in a dilapidated condition. This burj is 5 meters high and is made of baked mud bricks. The length, width and height of these bricks are 30, 18 and 6 cm respectively (dev:2022, 54).

Discussion

As we know Archaeology is an important source for the reconstruction of history. In this present research, archaeological information has been collected by the researcher using village to village survey method in the Jalalabad block of Fazilka district in Punjab state.

The study area is also known as Malwa Plain in Punjab and comes under the sub-tropical semi-arid climate zone, but the presence of the Sutlej River not only provided fertile land for agriculture but also made water available for irrigation, as a result, favourable conditions were created for the construction of settlements here, but less compared to Indus and Saraswati rivers.

A few archaeological sites are reported in this area, due to the destruction of ancient sites for agriculture activities. Frequent changes in the course of the Sutlej River in the last four centuries is also responsible for it because the course of the river shifted continuously in the west direction. The first cultures found to settle in the area based on present research belong to the early historical period. Nukeria is the only archaeological site associated with this culture. Basins, pots, and containers are small in size. Among these characters, the ones with curves inwards are prominent, whereas depictions of them are very rare. The major vessel types are inward-turned bowls.

The colour of the pottery found in all eight early medieval sites is also red and grey. The size of these containers is very small. Along with this some evidence of painting also found on them.

These structural remains are made up of baked clay. At the Hamid Saheedok site, the researcher found the shape of a horseshoe or the English letter U on the red-coloured bricks of baked clay. Along with this, some baked clay structures have also been found on which carvings have been done. Looking at the architecture related to the early medieval period, it seems that these structures might have been used in the entrance gate and Amalek of the temple. Finally, the typological study of ceramics and structural remains indicated that these sites belong to the early historical and early medieval period.

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