

Findings of Archaeological Exploration at Fazilka and Khuiyan Sarwar Blocks in Fazilka, District, Punjab

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Abstract: The Present Research Paper is based on the archaeological remains found from different places in Fazilka and Khuiyan Sarwar blocks of the Fazilka district in southwestern Punjab. As the aftereffect of explorations, the author explored nine archaeological sites, all explored sites were discovered from previously explored sites. Based on a preliminary examination of data, it seems that these sites belong to the early medieval and medieval periods. Throughout the article, an effort has been made to reconstruct a comprehensive view of the early medieval and medieval history and archaeology of the Fazilka and Khuiyan Sarwar blocks (Fazilka, Punjab).

Keywords: Fazilka, Archaeological, Exploration, Culture and Early Medieval.

Introduction

Fazilka district is situated in the southwest direction of the state of Punjab. Fazilka District was formed on January 27, 2011, as a new district. Earlier, this area came under the Ferozpur district. Fazilka district is the biggest rice production area in Punjab. Out of the five blocks of the Fazilka district, two blocks have been selected for study, and the total area of both blocks, Fazilka and Khuiyan Sarwar is 1493.88 square kilometres. Fazilka and Khuiyan Sarwar blocks are two important blocks of Fazilka district; Fazilka's origin dates back to 1844 CE. It was established by Mr Vans Agnew, the original owner of the land, Mian Fazil Watoo. Agnew, payment of Rs 144 and annas eight was Paid to his descendants in 1877 from a panchayat fund and named the place after Mian Fazil Watoo (Lambardar) as Fazilka (MSME, 2020) and Khuiyan Sarwar block was named after Sardar Sarwar Khan, who was

probably the vassal of a large part of this region. Apart from this, two national highways, National Highway 10 and National Highway 15 pass through the middle of the block Khuiyan Sarwar, which connects the block to the district headquarters. National Highway 10 and Highway 20 pass through the Fazilka block, which works to connect the district with other cities and main industrial units (e.g. Census Report 2011).

Location

The present study area comes under the dominion of Blocks Fazilka and Khuiyan Sarwar of Fazilka district Punjab. Out of the five blocks of the Fazilka district two blocks have been selected for study which is situated between 30°63' to 30°23' N and 73°58' to 74°22' E Fazilka block and 29°59' to 35°15' N and 73°52' to 74°13' E is Khuiyan Sarwar in southwestern Punjab. These blocks are bordered by the Jalalabad block from the northern side and the southern side is enclosed by Shree Ganga-Nagar district from Rajasthan. The Eastern boundary coincides with the block Abohar and district Shree Muktsar-Sahib and while the Western boundary of the region is surrounded by a 102 km-long international border of India and Pakistan. The present study area falls under the catchment of the Satluj River and its tributaries, in the ancient period river Satluj was called Vyas and this river flowed in the region of the ancient Saraswati and Darishadwati River catchment area (e.g. Oldham, 1893).

Previous Work

First of all, Alexander Cunningham started archaeological exploration in India, during 1862- 65 and he explored Haryana and Punjab under the tour program of Punjab. The first survey of Ferozepur district was conducted under the leadership of Madhubala ji and Jagatpati joshi ji as a result of which eight archaeological sites were identified. Out of which two sites come under Fazilka and Khuiyan Sarwar section, which is Arniwala and Lakhhowali (e.g. Madhubala, 1975-76: 248). Three cultural strata were identified from Arniwala, which belong to the early Harappan, Harappan and Historical periods respectively. Only one cultural layer came to light in Lakhowali which dates back to the early historical period. In 2007-08, 65 villages of Ferozepur district were surveyed by ASI's Chandigarh circle, which included the present Fazilka. During this time only one site came to light in Haripura (30°8'N to 72°2'E) village of Abohar, which belongs to the historical period (IAR, 2007-08 98-99). ASI's Chandigarh circle was again surveyed in 2011-12, this work was done under the leadership of Akshat Jain (Kaushik, 2015). This survey was based on the village-to-village method. During this survey, one archaeological mound and five British-period buildings came to light in the Fazilka and Khuiyan Sarwar section. The archaeological mound Marukwala village is located at 30°33'N to 74°10'E. It is situated 30 KM towards the North-East direction from the district headquarters.

Historical Outline

The foundation of the city of Fazilka was laid in 1844 AD by an English officer named Oliver. Oliver took the land from the then owner of the land, Mian Fazil Wattoo, named the place Fazil, and appointed another officer, Wayne Agnew, to that place. Wayne Agnew got himself made Bangla for the first time at that place. Due to the construction of a bungalow at that place for the first time, that place also came to be known as Bungalow. This name is still used by the local people today. After a few years, Oliver opened some shops there, settled people there, and named that place Fazilka after Fazil (fazilka.gov.in). On the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria of England in 1898 A.D., the railroad

was built here for the first time (FCP 2021:7). During 1908, the rain caused severe destruction in the region and also damaged historic buildings (DDMP 2019:10). Being a border district, the district had to face the horrors of two Indo-Pak wars, which took place in 1965 and 1971, respectively (DDMP 2019:11). Presently, Fazilka district is a Hindu majority area (Census Report District Ferozpur 2011:10). Badda Lake and Ghantaghar are prominent in the district from a cultural and tourism point of view (FCP 2021:8, Census Report District Ferozpur 2011:10). Ghantaghar is built in the Mughal-British architectural style, which was constructed in 1939. Before the Indo-Pak partition, the district was a major centre of trade, but after the partition, its importance declined due to the migration of raw materials to Pakistan and the development of the city of Bikaner.

Geographical Outline

Punjab Plain gently slopes down. It slopes Southward, being perhaps tilted in that direction northward extension of the Aravalli, now buried under the alluvium of Sutlej, Beas and Ravi (Bala, 2014). The Fazilka and Khuiyan Sarwar blocks are located in the tropical climate zone. Generally, the study area comes under the Punjab Plain, which is part of the Indus-Gangetic Plain. The land position of these blocks has been formed due to sedimentary deposits of the Indus River and its tributaries, rivers like the Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej, etc., of which the Sutlej River is prominent because this area is situated on the eastern coast of the Sutlej River. In Punjab, this ground is also known as Malwa Maidan. The new alluvial plain has been formed as a result of the ancient and recent sedimentation process called Khadar (e.g. Wadia 1953:385, RL Singh 1971:83). The ancient alluvial region is also called Bangor, which was formed in the Middle and Upper Pleistocene periods (e.g. Wadia, 1953:391; Khullar, 2014:49). The entire part of the block is cultivable. The Satluj River passes through the western part of both blocks, which generally forms the geographical international boundary of India and Pakistan. There are 2000 hectares of forest land in Fazilka district.

Research Methodology

Mainly, for archaeological examination, we use exploration and excavation methods. The investigator took the exploration method to collect samples of physical remains of human beings from archaeological sites and to find out about new sites in this region. The researcher conducted village-to-village exploration following previous studies. This extensive exploration was carried out during the rainy spell because, during the rain, antiquities came out of the mound in the rain gullies. The explorer collected the samples from the rain gullies, surface drains, and tube-well drains at the sites. To record the accurate geo-coordinates of every site, the researcher made use of Polaris.

A high-resolution digital camera was brought into use for photography of sites and remains. Navigation GPS application on a digital device during the exploration. the point of sites plotted on the map of Fazilka and Khuiyan Sarwar blocks with the help of Arch-GIS Software. Regarding the identification of the ceramics industry and the dating of cultural remains, the researcher followed the typology method, and the approximate size of sites was defined based on the diffusion of physical remains.

Exploration

The earliest archaeological survey is used to obtain the archaeological information of any area. In the present archaeological survey village to village archaeological survey has been used. Before

starting the archaeological survey, the researcher should get information about the published research related to archaeology in the study area. Appropriate information helps in knowing the earlier known settlements and in designing the research by the present researcher (e.g. Nitin 2022 pp-23)

Cultural antiquities not only give information about the existence of archaeology but also put on cultural sequence. Based on the cultural material obtained from the archaeological survey, the settlement plan, and environmental conditions of the ancient societies are studied. The main objective of an archaeological survey is to understand the activities of the past by obtaining antiquities from ancient sites.

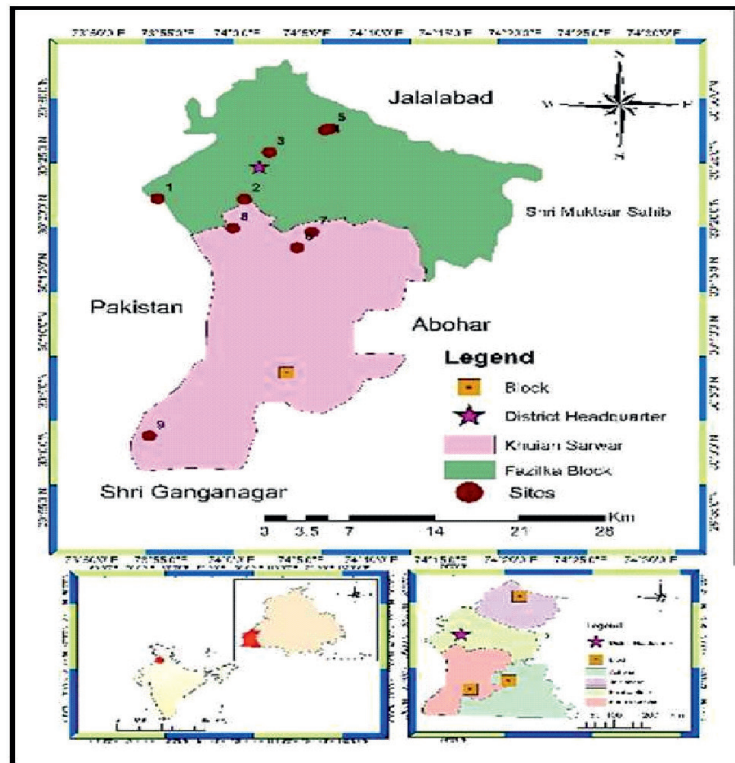


Fig. 1 Fazilka and Khuiyan Sarwar Block Sites

During the village-to-village field, examination, the explorer visited around 149 villages and explored the nine archaeology sites, all discovered sites were from earlier sightseer sites. In the study of archaeological remains, it seems that these sites belong to the Early Mediaeval to the mediaeval period. It was observed that most of the sites were found under cultivation as well and some sites had been eliminated for agriculture and established modern settlements. However, remaining sites are moving towards the end rapidly, due to the new habitation and agriculture. Some scholars already explored this area which has been described in previous works. These explorations were conducted so far back in 1975 by Madhubala ji, so the researcher felt a requirement for exploration with a new objective in this region.

From Pacca Chisti, In this archaeological site, a bowl made of baked clay has been found in good condition, and blue and orange-coloured glass bangles have been found among the cultural antiquities, which are related to the early mediaeval culture. Pieces of red, black, and grey pottery have been found at this site (fig. 5). According to cultural material, we can probably say that this site belongs to early mediaeval (e.g. Nitin 2022, p. 26).

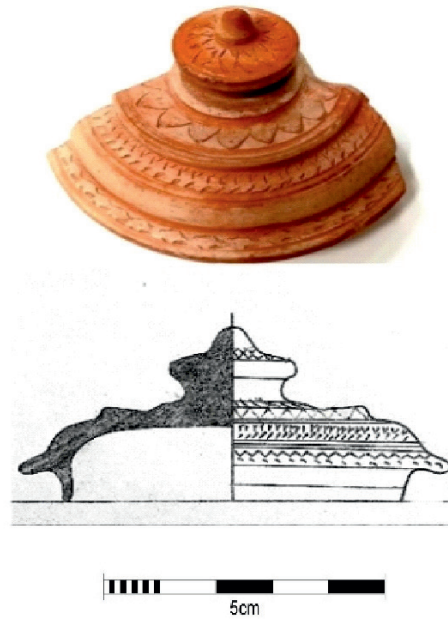


Fig. 2: Terracotta red ware (lid)

From the Ramkot site At the time of the present survey, in the cultural material, baked clay bangles (fig. 2) were obtained from this site, and based on the pottery and antiquities obtained, this culture is related to the early mediaeval culture (e.g. Nitin. 2022, p. 33).



Fig. 3: Terracotta black unshaped and red flat and round shaped bangles



Fig. 4: Terracotta black ware with black slip

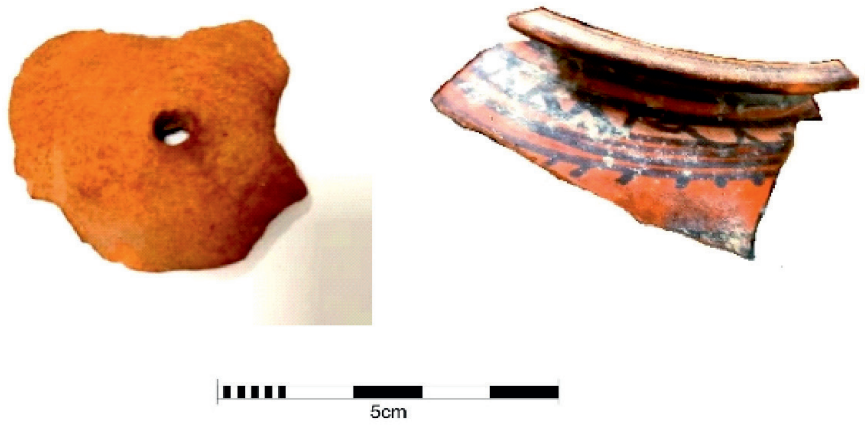


Fig. 5: Terracotta wheel & pottery from Ramkot

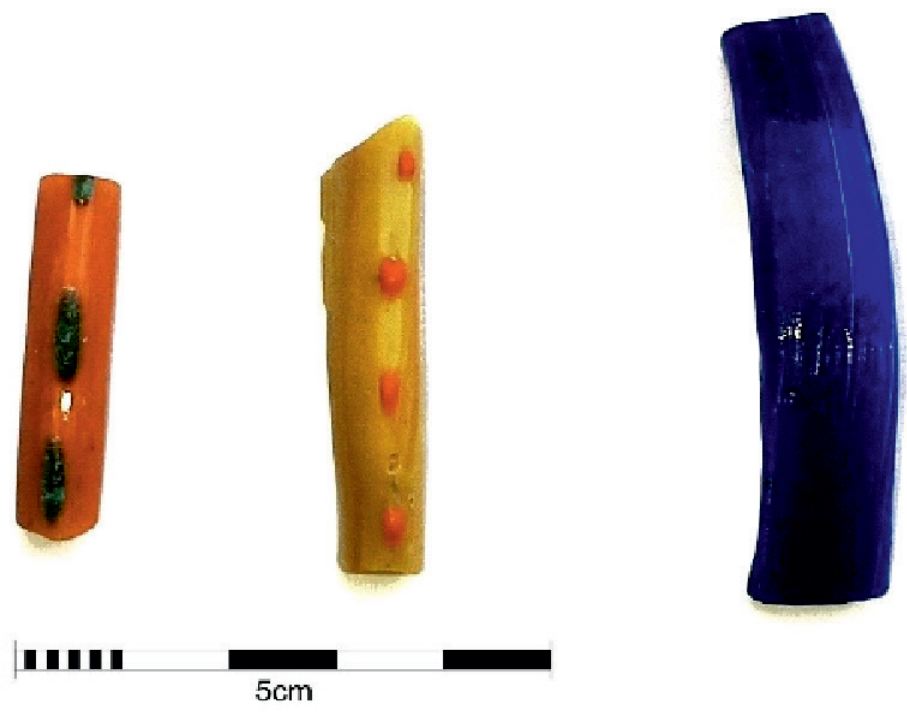


Fig. 6: Glass bangles are found from Pakka Chisti or Usman khara sites



Fig. 7: Ramkot Archaeological site



Fig. 8: Bandiwala Archaeological site

These sites are Pacca Chisti, Choti Odian, Killi, Thay Kalandar-1, Thay Kalandar-2, Ramkot, Khui Khera, Bandiwala, and Usman Khera. In these different sites, mainly eight sites belong to early mediaeval culture, and the Usman Khera site belongs to mediaeval culture.

Results and Discussion

Archaeology plays an important role in the reconstruction of the ancient history of any area. In the present research paper, the researcher did a village-to-village exploration/survey of two important blocks, Fazilka and Khuiyan Sarwar, in the Fazilka district of Punjab. As it is known from earlier research, of the two sites discovered by Madhubala, the Arniwala site was related to the early Harappan and Harappan culture, and the other site, Lakkhowali was related to the early historical culture. Because the Sutlej River provided fertile land as well as water for irrigation. Despite all this, very little evidence of archaeological settlements has been found in the study area. A total of 149 villages have been archaeologically surveyed by the present researcher and found nine archaeological sites. Due to less availability of archaeological sites, they are not more ancient, because of floods brought by the Sutlej River and in the last four centuries Satluj River the changed course from east to west, the archaeological habitats must have been disturbed (Firozpur Gazetteer 2011: 26).

Maybe in this long time, the Sutlej deposited sediments in this area. Because of this, the archaeological sites must have been buried in the trough. In this archaeological exploration, researchers found knife-age bowls from many sites. And different types of pottery (Red, black, grey), in black and grey pottery generally makers did dot and zigzag designs also internal and outer designs with different colours. Generally, three types of terracotta bangles are found at the Ramkot site in this bangle one is fully black and unshaped and the other two are round shape and flat surface. With this antiquity, the researcher found glass bangles with different colours (orange, yellow and red). These bangles were found in the knife ages bowl in the archaeological section. Then we can say that bangles are from the early mediaeval period, Also Researchers found different types of highly decorated lids. After studying all these antiquities and pottery researchers probably say these sites belong to the early mediaeval and mediaeval period.

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