



Sinauli : A Harappan Burial Site of Western Uttar Pradesh

Dr. K. K. Sharma

Associate Professor Department of History MM College, Modinagar, Meerut

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This is an archaeological site which came to light in 2005 and when systematic digging was started by the Archaeological Survey of India, it was found to be a goldmine of information. Actually the site lies within the agricultural fields of village Sinauli (29°08N 77°12'E) which lies on the Baraut – Tanda road in Dist. Baghpat.

The discovery of this important Harappan site happened by chance. In the course of working on his field, a farmer came across some pottery.



Source : Archaeological Survey of India

It is said that they came across a skull also which completely dismantled as soon as the farmers started washing it. The news of this spread to the press as well as the local ASI office bearers. When on inspection it was confirmed that the pottery was Harappan in origin, a proper excavation was planned.

Sinauli is the largest burial site of the Harappan civilisation ever to be discovered. Nearly 125 human buried human skeletons have been unearthed from here. This site has proven to be one of the most important archaeological sites of the Harappan civilisation complex not just in the Ganges – Yamuna Doab, but in the whole of the Indian subcontinent. The importance of this archaeological site stems not just from the fact that it has given us some of the best preserved skeletal remains of Homo sapiens living in this cultural complex, but also nearly settled one of the biggest mysteries of ancient Indian archaeology.

The Copper Hoards, were a mystery which had not been solved in the past decades. In the Sinauli burial ground, a skeleton of the Mature Harappan period has been unearthed with an antenna sword of the

Copper Hoard cultural complex, proving that both belong to the same period and also that they were part of the same cultural complex.

In addition, the site has given us excellent information regarding the burial practices of the Harappan people. Nearly hundred and twenty five skeletons were unearthed from this site making it the largest burial site of the Harappan civilisation ever discovered. There were three types of burials that were unearthed here –

1. Complete burial with complete human skeleton and burial pots.
2. Symbolic burial where only pots or artifacts were kept and buried. A copper antenna sword was the only artefact buried in one such burial, there were many anthropomorphic figures buried together in another raising possibility of these being symbolic of many people.
3. Artificially extended burial.

Some interesting facts have emerged from a cursory analysis of the burial practices of the Harappans as seen at this site.



Beautiful beads from Harappan site of Sinauli, Dist. Baghpat. t



Beads from Harappan site of Sinauli, Dist. Baghpat.



Gold artifact from Harrapan site of Sinauli, Dist. Baghpat.



A burial at Sinauli.



Bone point from Harappan burrial site of Sinauli, Dist. Baghpat.



Burial of a woman being excavated at the Harappan site of Sinauli.



Necklaces made out of beads from Harrapan site of Sinauli, Dist. Baghpat.



Gold jewelry adorning a skeleton at excavation of Harappan site of Sinauli, Dist. Baghpat.

Source : Archaeological Survey of India.

The first is that the skeletons are aligned in the north – south axis, the same axis in which dead bodies are kept in Indian homes even today and the axis in which funeral pyres are built.

The second was the presence of burial pots with each buried human grave. The system of burial pots still survives in modern Indian and pots are kept with graves of children who are buried. Cremation became the accepted practise in the post – Vedic period though Rig Veda and Atharva Veda both mention cremation and burial as accepted practises of disposal of the dead (2).

A large amount of Harappan pottery and other artefacts were unearthed at Sinauli. Pottery included jars, vessels of various types, dish on stand etc. Many types of beads were unearthed with gold jewellery in the form of necklaces, bangles etc. Copper bangles were also found, some on the skeletons themselves. Mono anthroporphs of copper and gold were also unearthed. An interesting artefact which was unearthed was a large Urn (agnivedica), its usage needs further analysis.



Harappa pot burried under the leg of a burial at Sinauli. Photo Dr.



A burial at Sinauli



A dish on stand and other pottery excavated at Sinauli, Dist. Baghpat.



Burial pots at the Harappan site of Sinauli.



Partly exposed dish on stand and pots at excavation of Harappan site of Sinauli, Dist. Baghpat.



Ethno - archaeology. Pots being used in modern child burials in India in 2011.



A copper Antenna Sword with copper sheath as unearthed at Harappan burrial site of Sinauli, Dist. Baghpat.

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Copper arrowheads as they were found at Harappan burrial site of Sinauli, Dist. Baghpat.

Source : Archaeological Survey of India.



Copper sheath of sword decorated with beads as unearthed at Harappan burrial site of Sinauli, Dist. Baghpat.

Source : Archaeological Survey of India.

The large size of this burial ground as well as the varying types of burials unearthed here is suggestive of the fact that either there is a very large Harappan urban centre near this site which has still not been discovered and needs further field study, maybe even as large as Harappa itself in view of the large area covered by the burial ground. Or alternatively, this is a common burial ground for many small Harappan centres all around this site which need to be identified.

A detailed report of the Sinauli excavation, including a DNA analysis of the bones is awaited.

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