



Cultural Development of Jammu Region(From Prehistory to Early Historic Period)

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ABSTRACT

A cursory glance of the existing corpus of modern historical literature on Jammu is enough to indicate that relatively little has been done on pre, proto and the early history of Jammu region as compared to the history of the post eighteenth century. The major quantum of research on the region is largely, if not completely, concerned with the construction of political history, that too, of post 18th century. The study of pre-historic and early historic societies has hardly been matter of any concern. The reason for the marginalization of the history of the prehistoric and historic society in the modern historiography of may be sought in the contesting context of the origin of historiographic tradition of which also defined the post 18th century as the central temporal concern of historians working on the region. The result has been that while writings on political history, especially from Maharaja Gulab Singh onwards, have proliferated over time, there has been a conspicuous absence of any focused writing which tries to capture the sequence of cultural development from prehistory to early historic period of the region. Thus, despite an impressive output of historical research on Jammu, there remains a yawning gap in our knowledge about the pre-historic and early historic development in the Jammu region. This seems intriguing if seen in the light of the fact that since the days of De Terra and Paterson (1938), continual contribution has been made in the field of pre and early historic archeology of the region. In fact the recent excavations and explorations have brought to light the materials, well located in time and space, which have the potential to throw light on the early history of the region. The present paper aims at filling up this gap in our knowledge of the development of cultural sequence of the region by using recent geoarchaeological finds.

KEYWORDS

Geoarchaeological, Soan culture, Siwaliks, Harappan, Shikar, Mace head.

The stone tools are the evidence of the presence of primitive human society subsisting on stone tools in Jammu region. Like the human evolutions, evolutionary trends are also noticed in stone tools. This evolutionary order is known as Stone Age cultural sequence. Lower Palaeolithic, Middle Palaeolithic and Upper Palaeolithic are generally accepted Stone Age sequences. The Stone Age cultural sequence of Jammu region falls on the same lines of pebble tool tradition as established Stone Age cultural sequence of Soan culture in Siwalik hills of Potwar (Pakistan) and Beas valley in Himachal Pradesh. That is why sites of pebble tools known as Soan culture are wide spread in Jammu. All the sites reported so far in Jammu region have surface finds and therefore, the types and occurrence of stone tools on four terrace levels have been the basis for framing sequential pattern of culture. Thus all the explorations made to date seem to indicate that Jammu's earliest evidence of human occupation dates in common with the North-West India and particularly Punjab and Himachal Pradesh.

The discovery of crude and heavy Stone Age tools meant for use for breaking objects or for throwing at enemies and shikar, do not convey the idea of a human society with settled habitats, but favours a life with nomadic characteristics. People living in natural shelters were primarily hunters and root-gatherers subsisting on flesh, wild fruits and roots. As human by nature is a social animal, the palaeolithic human of Jammu region lived in a small group of families bound by ties of blood kinship in a crude association convenient for self-defence and group hunting, roaming about in search of shikar, halting temporarily on the banks of rivers, lakes and pools. The art of agriculture and cattle-rearing were probably unknown to the early man who left behind no tradition and symbol of his existence except crude, stone tools scattered all over the region.

The primitive human society of Jammu region changed during the process of cultural evolution. In subsequent ages it took to cattle-rearing and agriculture, and adopted a settled domestic life, building mud or wooden shelters with thatched roofs (a

peculiarity which persists in the hills and the kandi areas to this day). This became possible because of the development of technique/method of flaking which led to the production of uniformly thin flakes known as blades, which could be used for cutting and dressing wood and edibles. Two stray agricultural tools known in archaeological terms as mace heads were found at Dayalchak and Mananu. Two similar fragmentary stone axes of the New Stone Age were picked up at Jhiri near Akhnoor. The pottery found here is generally handmade leading to the conclusion that the people changed their nomadic character of Old Stone Age and took to a settled life and started production of food through crude form of agriculture and cattle-rearing.

The evolution in stone tools from about 1.6 million years of early Soan to about 15000 years ago of final Soan indicate the slow process of cultural changes corresponding to the human evolutions. Thus, during human evolution reliance on stone tools increased and tool typology diversified according to mode of hunting and gathering. Humans were hunter and gatherer till about 12000 years ago when people of Middle East started the reproductive cycle of some plants and animals which their ancestors had gathered and hunted for generations. By about 9000 B.C. large scale domestication of plants and animals had taken place in this region and they started spreading into neighbouring regions. The earliest remains of domestication of plants and animals in Indian sub-continent comes from Neolithic level in Swat valley of Pakistan.

In the light of the absence of Mesolithic culture, stratigraphic content of final Soan and remains of plants and animals in Jammu region is difficult to identify. Therefore, transitional stage between food gathering and food producing is not yet clear. But polished stone tools of Neolithic period found from various sites at the foot hills of Siwaliks indicate some sort of food producing stages. Therefore, it can be presumed that food producing stage in Jammu region started earlier than pre-Harappan period as reported elsewhere in north-western part of the Indian sub-continent.

The clear examples of the existence of the Neolithic culture in Jammu region are the discovery of the artifacts from the village Baili in district Udhampur. Baili is situated at the foot hills of Trikuta. The discovery of new site in village Baili appears to be on the side of the trade route from Kannauj to Kashmir, and was a popular one and has been mentioned by Alberuni. The discovery of many stone tools in the area adds new information to the history of Jammu region. The importance of the site is that besides Neolithic tools, stone tools of Palaeolithic periods have also been discovered, which distinguish it from other Neolithic sites found in Jammu region and the element of cultural continuity. Earlier, to understand Neolithic horizon of this region, trial excavations at Malpur on Jammu Akhnour Highway were undertaken by Srinagar circle of Archaeological Survey of India. A fairly good number of polished stone tools are found including axes, adzes, chisels, picks, hammer stone, ring stone and grinder mullers. Besides finished stone tools, considerable numbers of unfinished tools have also been reported.

The discovery of a proto-historic site at the village of Manda in Akhnour, on the right bank of the Chenab, lifts suddenly the curtain to flash before us the scene of a cultural human society during the proto-historic centuries, represented by pottery shreds and a few domestic articles, revealing the existence of Harappan, late Harappan red ware, grey ware, and black slipped ware. The further excavations at the site revealed a continuous sequence of a cultural deposit, the earliest marked by the presence of Harappan represented by the pottery consisting mainly of pre-Harappan red ware and Harappan red ware. Manda is the northernmost site of Indus Valley Civilization (2500–1600 B.C.), with an occupational deposit of 9.20 m containing a threefold cultural sequence.

The explorations within thirty kilometers to the north-west of Jammu city have revealed early historical sites at Akhnur, Ambaran, Gurha and Mandli-ka-Merah. Further exploration at more than a dozen sites in Jammu yielded material belonging to the historical and medieval periods. As already pointed out that Akhnur yielded pottery of the early Christian era represented by the sprinkler and bowl; whereas Ambaran, Dalpat, Pambarwan, Bahar and a few other sites, viz., Tikri Mounds, Guru Baba ka Tiba, Batad, Jhiri, Gullwadde, Jafarchak and Datrial, yielded the bowl and lid a typical Gupta terracottas of the late historical period. Medieval finds were discovered at Ambi, Bamal, Bandwal, Man-Chak, Mandiala, Lehrian and Kurora with stamped and glazed pottery. Some shreds have been supposed to belong to the first or second millennium before Christ. Thus, these finds give us the cultural sequence of Jammu from the Harappan age, about 2500 B.C., to early Christian eras.

The discovery of Buddhist monastic complex on the right bank of river Chenab at Ambaran, near Akhnur, datable from 1st century B.C. to 4th-5th century A.D., gives clear indication of presence of early historic culture in the region.

The brief summation of the archaeological finds of Jammu presented above is enough to indicate that like other regions of the subcontinent Jammu also experienced different cycles of cultural evolution. It has been the cradle of human from the early geological ages - the old and the new Stone Ages. The pre-Soanian and Soanian primitive human made the rugged plateau and river valleys of Jammu his habitat. He evolved the whole span of his crude culture in these hills, probably being influenced by his brethren in the adjoining plains, into a finer and advanced society of the Harappan era, followed by a still more cultured pattern represented by the artistic terracottas living in elegance even with those of the Gandhara school. The primitive and historical society of Jammu seems to have been a part of that of the northern India and in that capacity was influenced by all the cultural currents being swept from age over the whole of north India from Bengal to Baluchistan.

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