

An Archaeological Explorations in Mahendergarh District, Haryana

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Abstract: In the last forty years, exploration has been done to know the archaeological potential of large parts of Haryana. Unfortunately, very little work has been done in the southern part of the state. Mahendergarh was earlier known as 'Kanaud' because of its association with the Kanaudia group of Brahmans. During the middle of the nineteenth century, it came to be known as Mahendergarh. Although the nomenclature of the district is not very old, the antiquity of the area within it can be extended to even earlier times. In the absence of archaeological excavations in the district nothing more can be added. Most of the sites discovered in the district belong to the late medieval period. In the absence of evidence, it also becomes extremely difficult to trace the successive stages of the historical development of the region. Stone Age tools are the earliest evidence that attest to the presence of man in the southern part of Haryana. Based on archaeological investigation, remains from the Stone Age to the Medieval period have been found in the present study area.

Keywords: Antiquity, Cultures, Dohan, Exploration, Historical, Paleolithic, Settlements

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Introduction

Mahendergarh was earlier known as 'Kanaud' due to its association with the Kanodia group of Brahmans. In the middle of the nineteenth century it came to be known as Mahendergarh. How this information came to be known in earlier times is not known. The district takes its name from the town of Mahendergarh (28°27' N and 76° 14' E) which is located about 26 km to the north-east of Namaul, 40 km South-west of Dadri and 54 km West of Rewari on Rewari - Bikaner railway line. The headquarters of the district are located at Namaul. It is bounded on the north by Bhiwani district, on the east by Rewari district and on the south-east, south, south-west by the state of Rajasthan. It has an irregular shape with a length of about 64 km North to South and breadth of about 44 km East to West. The present area of the district is 1899 sq km. It consists of six tehsils, Narnaul, Ateli, Nangal

Choudhary, Mahendergarh, Kanina, Satnali and Eight blocks, Narnaul, Ateli, Nangal Choudhary, Mahendergarh, Kanina, Shima, Nizampur & Satnali. Mahendergarh comprising total 374 villages.

Although the nomenclature of the district is not very old, the antiquity of the area within it can be extended to even earlier times. In the absence of archaeological excavations in the district nothing more can be added to what has been said above. So far not a single PGW site has come to light in the district, possibly indicating a north-eastward migration of the Aryans from the banks of the Saraswati and Drishadwati due to the drying up of their courses. Most of the sites discovered in the district belong to the medieval period. It may be further pointed out that the district may have been outside the mainstream of Aryan culture and hence not specifically mentioned as an independent territorial unit in traditional literature. In the absence of evidence, it also becomes extremely difficult to trace the successive stages of the historical development of the region.

Geography has been an important factor in the development of ancient cultures. It is no longer a story of boring facts about the Earth, but must show the relationship between humans and the physical features that affect them through the ages. A strict demarcation between geography on the one hand and archeology and history on the other is not possible. Subbarao has rightly said that 'For an intelligent understanding of the patterns of development of cultures in India, one must begin with the geographical factor.' Every region has its own character in which humans, plants, soil and environment contribute a lot and such is the case with the region of southern part of Haryana. The Mahendergarh district exhibits their adjustment to the difficulties as well as to the opportunities presented by their physical setting. Mahendergarh districts embody all such features as inland streams, sandy plains, upland tracts and rocky outcrops which are characteristics of an arid environment. The general slope of Haryana is from northeast to southwest, but in the southern Haryana plain in which these districts fall, the slope is towards north. That is why the rain-fed streams of this region namely Dohan and Krishnawati flow towards the north. These streams brought rainwater from Rajasthan during the monsoon season and created irregular plains in the area.

The sandy plain is associated with the Aravali hills. There are two prominent sandy plain areas in the region and this sandy plain has a regional slope from west to east the dunes found in this area are of a fixed nature and reach about 3 to 6m in height. These dunes were found higher in the west, 5 to 20m than in the east where they are now between 2 and 5m. Sometimes these dunes make a 'U' shape depression within the dunal tract. These depressions are known as talas which have good potential for groundwater and can be used for minor irrigation works.

The hill ranges falling in the region under the present study stretch roughly south-west north-east direction and connect them with the Aravali ranges emanating from Khetri in Rajasthan and running through Narnaul, Nangal Chaudhry, Ateli Mandi, Bawal and Rewari. These ranges extend into very low hills from Delhi to Jaipur through Rewari and Mahendergarh districts of Haryana.

Topography and Drainage System

The region under present study has no perennial river flowing in it. There are, however, a few small streams and channels which flow only during the rainy season. The Dohan and Krishnawati are important among them. There were also some small mountain streams like Dhani Cheema, Mosnota, Pachnota, Meghot Binja, Ganwari Jat, Nangal Durgo, Ateli Mandi, Kheri etc. These streams mostly originated from the local hills and ran through the villages' lands after which they were named but these streams are now rarely seen.

Dohan is also an important seasonal stream of the study area which flows in the district. In the Mahabharata, it is described as Vadhusara, a sacred stream with many holy places. It is said to have

originated from the tears of Divya Pauloma, wife of the great sage Bhargu and mother of the famous sage Chyavana. Dohan River flows near the ashram of sage Chyavan. Dhosi Hill has gained popularity nationwide because it is believed that sage Chyavan had performed penance here for many years. These references prove that Vadhusara (Dohan) must have been an important river in the early days.

This river also originates from the hills of Jaipur, about 6 km from Nim ka Thana (Rajasthan). It flows for 29 km in the Rajasthan region and then enters Mahendergarh district from the Khetri side of Rajasthan near Badopur and Jadupur villages, about 12 km northwest of Narnaul and flows for a length of about 50 km in the district and gets lost in Basai village about 16 km north of Mahendergarh town.

Krishnawati is known locally as Kasavati and originates in the Jaipur hills (Rajasthan) about 1.6 km east of Nim ka Thana and carries rainwater from Rajasthan during the rainy season. It enters the district at Bhedanti and Dostpur near Nangal Choudhary, about 25 km south of Narnaul town and moves north-east through Mosampur, Totahera, Saloni, Girdharpur etc. and finally terminates near Dahina in Rewari district it occurs.

The area under the present study is sandy. The soil of Mahendergarh district is very light, except in the northern area, where almost sandy soil lies on the ups and downs of the district, hence this soil is called sandy soil. The main characteristic of this soil is that it absorbs water rapidly. The region has a subtropical continental monsoon climate. This climate is characterised by hot summers, cool winter nights, and relatively little rainfall concentrated mainly during the monsoon and mostly dry except for three months (July to September). In the normal year, the monsoon or the rainy season starts in about the third week of June and continues with intermissions till about the end of September or the early part of October.

Due to population pressure and extensive farming, very little of the natural forests remain within the district, the area is not well forested but the available vegetation that is predominant in the area are xerophyte types such as Jant, Beri, Siris, Kikar and Shisham found throughout the study area. In villages, around village ponds, people plant trees like Neem, Peepal etc. mainly for shade. One of the most characteristic shrubs of the region is zhar-beri. The forests of the area have been cleared for colonization. As a result, the rich stock of wild animals and birds was reduced. Hindi is the mother tongue in the entire study area. However, the predominant dialect spoken in the entire study area is Ahirwati. People of some villages bordering Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan speak both Bagri (Rajasthani) and Ahirwati dialects.

The beginning of archaeological works in the region of the present study was made by Cunningham. He brought to light some medieval monuments. Some Yaudheya coins and copper hoard tools have been found from Rewari. A few sites are reported by R.P. Sharma of the Delhi Circle of Survey. D.P.S. Punia also explored this region. As a result, he reported a variety of archaeological material and several sites belonging to early historical, early medieval and medieval periods. Only one site was subjected to excavation, i.e. Khataoli, by C. Margabandhu and R.P. Sharma in 1979-80 in adjoining dist. Rewari.

Methodology

In the presented research paper, primary data has been collected through a detailed survey by visiting every village in the Mahendergarh district of Haryana. During explorations, all the known sites were examined by revisiting them in general and adding many more sites by surveying certain unexplored areas in particular. The local people of the region helped a lot in locating the ancient sites which are measured by pacing across them. The sites that have been occupied by the modern habitations could not be measured and no site was subjected even to trial excavation during the survey. As a result of village-to-village surveys, the researcher has brought to light a considerable number of sites from the

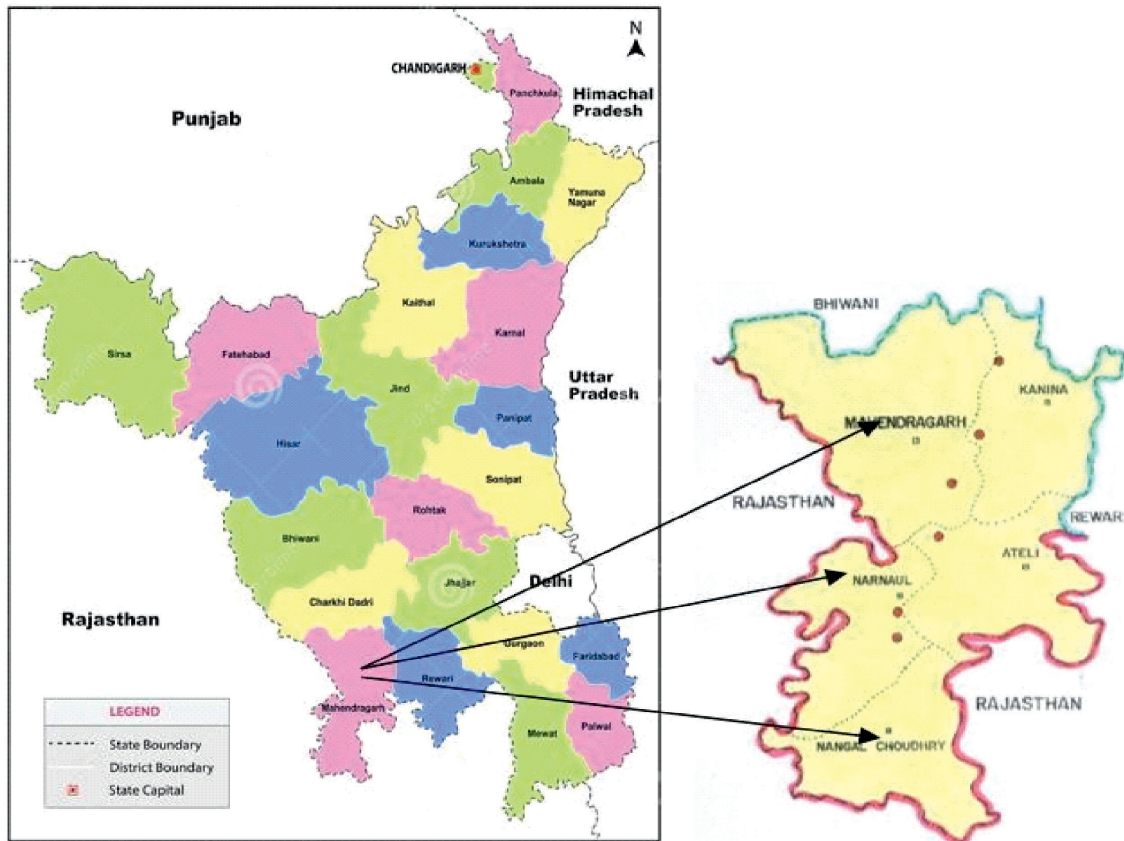
historic period to the early medieval period, except the Harappan period, and Painted Gray Ware. The total number of sites discovered so far in the area under review is 78. All these places are described alphabetically with latitude and longitude. Cultural material discovered from the survey and housed in different museums was analyzed and studied to address the problems. The available published literature and survey reports including unpublished dissertations were examined and their data was also included in this study.

Table 1: Showing Explored Sites along with Geo-references, size/area and Cultural Sequence

<i>Sr. No.</i>	<i>Site Name</i>	<i>Latitude</i>	<i>Longitude</i>	<i>Area (in acres)</i>	<i>Culture Sequence</i>
1	Aghiar	28° 21'	76° 13'	1-2	E. Med.
2	Akbarpur Sirohi	28° 17'	76° 13'	2-3	E. Med.
3	Baghot	28° 25'	76° 14'	1-2	Hist., E. Med.
4	Bhagrana	28° 19'	76° 09'	2-3	E. Med.
5	Bhalkhi	28° 10'	76° 15'	5-6	Hist., E. Med.
6	Bhojawas	28° 14'	76° 18'	3-4	E. Med.
7	Bhori	28° 07'	76° 13'	1-2	E. Med.
8	Bhushan Kalan	28° 02'	76° 11'	2-3	E. Med.
9	Bihali	28° 05'	76° 17'	3-4	Hist., E. Med.
10	Biharipur	28° 17'	76° 32'	1-2	E. Med.
11	Buchawas	28° 18'	76° 13'	3-4	E. Med.
12	Chamdhera	28° 15'	76° 10'	2-3	E. Med.
13	Chandpura	28° 08'	76° 04'	2-3	E. Med.
14	Dalanwas	28° 19'	76° 01'	2-3	E. Med.
15	Dhani Bathotha	28° 00'	76° 07'	3-4	E. Med.
16	Dohar Kalan	28° 07'	76° 01'	1-2	E. Med.
17	Dongra Jat	28° 12'	76° 13'	2-3	E. Med.
18	Goad	28° 07'	75° 59'	5-6	E. Med.
19	Gomla	28° 13'	76° 19'	4-5	E. Med.
20	Gudha	28° 19'	76° 15'	1-2	E. Med.
21	Gujarwas	28° 08'	76° 13'	2-3	Hist., E. Med.
22	Gulawala	28° 09'	76° 07'	2-3	E. Med.
23	Hamidpur	28° 07'	76° 02'	2-3	E. Med.
24	Israna	28° 17'	76° 18'	3-4	Hist., E. Med.
25	Jant	28° 22'	76° 09'	3-4	E. Med.
26	Jhagroli	28° 18'	76° 13'	3-4	E. Med.
27	Jhigawan	28° 14'	76° 15'	2-3	E. Med.
28	Kaimla	28° 19'	76° 16'	1-2	E. Med.
29	Kakrala	28° 18'	76° 19'	2-3	Hist., E. Med.
30	Kanina	28° 20'	76° 19'	2-3	Med.
31	Kanina-II	28° 20'	76° 19'	4-5	Hist., E. Med.
32	Kanti Bas	28° 03'	76° 18'	1-2	E. Med.
33	Kapoori	28° 17'	76° 21'	1-2	E. Med.
34	Katkai	28° 09'	76° 14'	1-2	E. Med.
35	Khatod	28° 16'	76° 07'	2-3	Hist., E. Med.
36	Kheri	28° 23'	76° 14'	3-4	E. Med.

<i>Sr. No.</i>	<i>Site Name</i>	<i>Latitude</i>	<i>Longitude</i>	<i>Area (in acres)</i>	<i>Culture Sequence</i>
37	Khudana	28° 24'	76° 07'	2-3	E. Med.
38	Kuksi	28° 10'	76° 07'	1-2	E. Med.
39	Kultajpur	28° 03'	76° 02'	4-5	E. Med.
40	Kurahwata	28° 18'	76° 06'	2-3	E. Med.
41	Madhogarh	28° 18'	76° 02'	1-2	E. Med.
42	Mandola	28° 20'	76° 05'	1-2	E. Med.
43	Mayee	28° 08'	76° 06'	1-2	E. Med.
44	Mohamadpur	28° 17'	76° 17'	2-3	E. Med.
45	Mundia Khera	28° 12'	76° 14'	2-3	E. Med.
46	Nain	28° 09'	76° 07'	3-4	E. Med.
47	Namaul	28° 03'	76° 06'	4-5	E. Med.
48	Nangal Chaudhary	28° 01'	76° 01'	4-5	E. Med.
49	Nangal Sirohi	28° 11'	76° 8'	1-2	E. Med.
50	Nanwan	28° 23'	76° 01'	2-3	E. Med.
51	Nanwan-II	28° 23'	76° 01'	2-3	E. Med.
52	Nawaz Nagar	28° 07'	76° 06'	5-6	E. Med.
53	Nimbira	28° 16'	76° 05'	1-2	E. Med.
54	Pal	28° 11'	76° 05'	4-5	E. Med.
55	Pali	28° 11'	76° 07'	2-3	E. Med.
56	Palri	28° 27'	76° 11'	2-3	E. Med.
57	Partal	28° 16'	76° 18'	1-2	E. Med.
58	Pathera	28° 20'	76° 13'	2-3	E. Med.
59	Pota	28° 26'	76° 14'	3-4	E. Med.
60	Rajpura	28° 05'	76° 16'	2-3	E. Med.
61	Rambas	28° 16'	76° 19'	2-3	E. Med.
62	Rampura	28° 08'	76° 08'	4-5	E. Med.
63	Salarpur	28° 09'	76° 13'	2-3	E. Med.
64	Salooni	28° 07'	76° 09'	4-5	E. Med.
65	Sarai Bahadur Nagar	28° 05'	76° 11'	1-2	E. Med.
66	Satnali	28° 23'	75° 58'	3-4	E. Med.
67	Sigra	28° 17'	76° 11'	2-3	E. Med.
68	Silarpur	28° 15'	76° 21'	3-4	E. Med.
69	Siyana	28° 27'	76° 14'	4-5	E. Med.
70	Sundrah	28° 15'	76° 16'	2-3	E. Med.
71	Surana	28° 05'	76° 10'	3-4	E. Med.
72	Surehti Pilania	28° 20'	75° 57'	3-4	E. Med.
73	Tajpur	28° 05'	76° 14'	3-4	E. Med.
74	Thanwas	28° 01'	76° 15'	4-5	E. Med.
75	Tobra	28° 06'	76° 14'	2-3	E. Med.
76	Uchchat	28° 24'	76° 16'	2-3	E. Med.
77	Unhani	28° 20'	76° 17'	2-3	E. Med.
78	Zerapur	28° 19'	76° 05'	2-3	Hist., E. Med.

Hist=Historical, E.Med. – Early Medieval, L. Med. – Medieval



Map: Shows map of Haryana and map of Mahendergarh district

Discussion

In the last fifty years, exploration has been done to know the archaeological potential of large parts of Haryana. Unfortunately, very little work has been done in the southern part of the state. In the 19th century, the archaeological importance of the area came to light with the discovery by Sir Alexander Cunningham of some monuments of medieval times. This aroused scholarly interest in the archaeological study of the area and some stray discoveries were reported by some scholars before the exploration by the present researcher.

Stone Age tools are the earliest evidence that confirms the presence of humans in the southern part of Haryana. Based on archaeological investigation the antiquity of the present study area has been pushed to the Palaeolithic period as Stone Age tools were found in Kultajpur, a village falling in the Aravalli ranges. As a result of the explorations conducted by the present researcher, 78 sites ranging from the Stone Age to the early medieval period have been brought to light. The distribution of sites in the district of the present study area is quite interesting. It shows the migration of people from east to west. This study area remained almost deserted during the post-Harappan period. In the district Rewari area, only two post-Harappan settlements have been observed in the area near the east of the Sahibi River but these are very small settlements. Regarding the number of post-Harappan and other earlier cultural sites, there is a possibility that some sites are buried under sand as wind erosion and deposition a major natural phenomena in this region. But this area remained sparsely or nominally settled in these early days compared to other areas of the North.

During the PGW phase and NBPW period, the area shows no habitation. Then after a gap of several centuries, the region shows inhabitation only in the historical period and 9 sites of this period

have been noticed. These sites are equally shared by the district. All the settlements are scattered on fresh ground, not in the places of early settlements. As we come to the early medieval period the number of such habitations increased considerably to 69 sites from 9 of the preceding phase of the 78 sites, 3 sites show habitation on earlier settlements. Disliking of the area in the early phases may be explained based on unsuitable geographical conditions such as sandy soil, meagre water resources, absence of perennial streams, high dunes, low and erratic rainfall, infertility of the soil and absence of technique to harness groundwater. But at the same time, it is to be noted that because of these very conditions, the region assumed strategic importance during the medieval times.

In historical and early medieval times, the general increase in the settlements is due to the migration of peasant communities from other areas. The availability of more labour force and better tools helped man in this period to harness groundwater for drinking and agricultural purposes. Hence scarcity of water was reduced to a considerable extent and this made survival possible in dry area cultivation of crops like barley, gram, mustard, bajara, moth, lobia, jowara, etc.

The smaller nature of settlements of all the phases and paucity of antiquities is an indication of the agricultural pastoral economy practised by the people and they lived in hamlets and villages. This is also attested by the excavation of the Post-Harappan site Khataoli. There is evidence to suggest agricultural expansion during the early historical and medieval times. Cultivation of sandy zones during the early medieval period also might have been encouraged by the landed aristocracy and advancement in tool technology in agriculture.

An attempt has been made to reconstruct the history of the area, based on all available data. The discovery of Stone Age tools suggests that humans first appeared in the region during the Stone Age. Then this area remained uninhabited until the arrival of the Kushans. Apart from the Kushans, the Yaudheyas and early medieval dynasties of North India such as the Pratiharas, Tomaras and Chauhans ruled the region. Ultimately, towards the end of the 12th century AD, the area of the present study came into the hands of foreigners who ruled India for a long period.

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