

Kalibangan (Pre – Harappan Settlement)

Dr. Dilip Kumar

Assistant Professor (Guest)

Dept. of Ancient Indian History & Archaeology,

Patna University, Patna

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Kalibangan is a town located at 29.47°N 74.13°E on the left or southern banks of the Ghaggar (Ghaggar - Hakra River) in Rajasthan. The Kalibangan pre-historic site was discovered by Luigi Pio Tessitori, an Italian Indologist (1887–1919). He was doing some research in ancient Indian texts and was surprised by the character of ruins in that area. He sought help from Sir John Marshall of the Archaeological Survey of India. At that time the ASI was conducting excavations at Harappa, but they were unaware of the significance of the ruins. In fact, Tessitori was the first person to recognize that the ruins were 'Prehistoric' and pre-Mauryan. Luigi Pio Tessitori also pointed out the nature of the culture, but at that time it was not possible to guess that the ruins of Kalibangan lay within the Indus Valley Civilization. He died five years before the Harappan culture was formally recognized.

After India's independence, both the major Harappan cities together with the Indus became a part of Pakistan and Indian archaeologists were compelled to intensify the search for Harappan sites in India. Amlanand Ghosh (Ex. Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, or ASI) was the first person to recognise this site as Harappan and marked it out for excavations. Under the leadership of B. B. Lal (then Director General, ASI), Balkrishna (B.K.) Thapar, M. D. Khare, K. M. Shrivastava and S. P. Jain carried out excavations for 9 years (1960–9) in 9 successive excavation sessions. Two ancient mounds were excavated, spread over half a kilometre (an area of a quarter square kilometre). On the western side is the smaller mound (KLB1), 9 meters high and known as the citadel. The Eastern mound, which is higher (12 meters) and bigger, is known as the lower city (KLB2).

The excavation unexpectedly brought to light a twofold sequence of cultures, of which the upper one (Kalibangan I) belongs to the Harappan, showing the characteristic grid layout of a metropolis and the lower one (Kalibangan II) was formerly called pre-Harappan but is now called "Early Harappan or antecedent Harappan". Other nearby sites belonging to IVC include Balu, Kunal, Banawali etc.

Pre – Harappan Phase of Kalibangan

Traces of pre-Harappan culture have been found only at the lower levels of the western mound. According to archaeological evidence, the Indus Valley culture existed at the site from the proto-Harappan age (3500 BC – 2500 BC) to the Harappan age (2500 BC – 1750 BC). This earlier phase is labelled Kalibangan-I (KLB-I) or Period-I. Similarity of pottery relates Kalibangan-I with the Sothi culture because a lot of this pottery was later discovered at Sothi village in North Western India.

Fort & Houses - In this phase, the settlement was fortified, using dried mud bricks, from the beginning of occupation. This *fort* had been built twice in different periods. Earlier, fort wall had a thickness of 1.9 meters, which was raised to 3.7–4.1 meters during reconstruction in this phase. Brick size was 20 × 20 × 10 cm in both construction-phases. The citadel mound (smaller mound) is a parallelogram about 130 meters on the east-west axis and 260 meters on the north-south. Town planning was like that of Mohen-jo-daro or Harappa. The direction of houses and brick sizes was markedly different from that used in the Harappan phase (KLB-II).

Within the walled area, the *houses* were also built of mud bricks of the same size as used in the fort wall; the use of burnt bricks is attested by a drain within the houses, remains of ovens and cylindrical pits, lined with lime plaster. Some burnt wedge shaped bricks have also been found.

Earliest Ploughed field – B. B. Lal, former DG of ASI writes, "Kalibangan in Rajasthan has given the evidence of the earliest (c. 2800 BC) ploughed agricultural field ever revealed through an excavation." It has been found south east of the pre-Harappan settlement, outside the fort. "Kalibangan excavations in present western Rajasthan shows a ploughed field, the first site of this nature in the world. It shows a grid pattern of furrows, placed about 30 cm apart running east-west and other spaced about 190 cm apart running north-south, a pattern remarkably similar to the one practiced even now." Even today, similar ploughing is used for two simultaneous crops in this region, esp. of mustard and gram. In order to preserve it, this excavated ploughed field area was refilled after excavation and the area was marked by concrete pillar posts.

Pottery – The distinguishing mark of this early phase is pottery, characterized by six fabrics labelled A, B, C, D, E and F, which were later identified also at Sothi in North Western India.

Fabrics A, B, and D can be clubbed together. They are red painted. Fabric-A is carelessly potted in spite of use of potter's wheel. It contains designs in light-black, often decorated with white lines. Lines, semicircles, grids, insects, flowers, leaves, trees and squares were favourite motifs. Fabric-B shows marked improvement in finishing, but the lower half was deliberately roughened. Flowers, animals were painted in black on red background.

Fabric-D contained designs of slanted lines or semicircles in some, while most pots were plain. But Fabric-C pottery was thicker and stronger. Fabric-C was distinguished by violet tinge and fine polish, with designs in black; it is the best proto-Harappan pottery in finishing. Fabric-E was light colored and Fabric-F was grey.

Other findings – Among the other finds of this Period are: small blades of chalcedony and agate, sometimes serrated or backed; beads of steatite, shell, carnelian, terracotta and copper; bangles of copper, shell and terracotta; terracotta objects like a toy-cart, wheel and a broken bull; quem with mullers, a bone point, and copper celts, including an unusual axe, etc. Toy carts suggest carts were used for transportation in early phase of Kalibangan.

End of Pre-Harappan Phase – B. B. Lal, former DG of ASI writes, "Kalibangan in Rajasthan ... has also shown that there occurred an earthquake around 2600 BC, which brought to an end the Early Indus settlement at the site." This is perhaps the earliest archaeologically recorded earthquake.^[18] At least three pre-historic earthquakes affecting the Indus Valley Civilization at Dholavira in Khadir have been identified during 2900–1800 BC.

KLB-I phase has left 1.6 meters of continuous deposits during five distinct structural strata, the last of which was destroyed perhaps by an earthquake and the site was abandoned around 2600 BCE, soon to be settled again by Harappans