Journal Global Values, Vol. VIII, No. 2, 2017, ISSN: (P) 0976-9447, (e) 2454-8391, Impact Factor 3.8741 *(ICRJIFR)*

UGC Approved Journal No. 63651

Proto- Historic Culture of India Revisting Ochre Coloured Pottery Culture

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Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh- 202002

Abstract

Presently an attempt is made to review the Ochre Coloured Pottery culture and its characteristic features. The Ochre Coloured Pottery (OCP) culture has been first identified by B.B. Lal inBisauli and RajpurParasu (U.P.) where people used primitive types of copper implements and an ill-fired and thick Ochre-Washed Pottery. Among the OCP types were, later on, found many wares made of well levigated clay, wheel made, slipped and often painted with black colour, sturdily and well-fired. The types included jars, vases, with flanged rims and elongated beaks, bowls basins, lids with and without knobs, dish-on-stand and handled ones were common shapes. Motifs included bull, floral scroll, curved comb designs, geometric designs, triangles, spirals, circles, semi-circles, loops, bands and parallel lines. Other characteristic finds included arrow heads, beads, pendants, bangles of copper, terracotta beads, figurines, bull horns and semi-precious stones like carnelian, soap-stone and arrow heads of bone, etc.

Keywords *Pottery, Copper Implements, Dish on stand, Terracotta, Bull Horns.*

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Dr. Nazim Husain Al Jafri,

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Journal Global Values, Vol. VIII, No.2, Article No. 11, pp.81-87, http://anubooks.com/?page_id=285

The Ochre Coloured Pottery (OCP) culture has been first identified by Lal[1] in Bisauli and RajpurParasu (U.P.) where people used primitive types of copper implements (found in 'copper hoards') and an ill-fired and thickOchre-Washed Pottery. Besides the Gangetic Valley, this pottery has been reported from as far places as Jorwe and Nasik[2]. Among the OCP types were, later on, found many wares made of well levigated clay, wheel made, slipped and often painted with black colour, sturdily and well-fired. The types included jars, vases, with flanged rims and elongated beaks, bowls basins, lids with and without knobs, dish-on-stand and handled ones were common shapes. Motifs included bull, floral scroll, curved comb designs, geometric designs, triangles, spirals, circles, semi-circles, loops, bands and parallel lines[3].

Other characteristic finds included arrow heads, beads, pendants, bangles of copper, terracotta beads, figurines, bull horns and semi-precious stones like carnelian, soap-stone and arrow heads of bone, etc.

A large number of OCP sites have so far been excavated in eastern Rajasthan, Haryana, Western and Eastern Uttar Pradesh; such as Jodhpura (District Jaipur), Siswal (District Hissar), Mitathal (District Bhiwani), Bara (District Rup-Nagar), Ambkheri (District Saharanpur), Bargaon (District Saharanpur), Hastinapur (District Meerut), Ahichchhatra (District Bareilly), Baheria (District Shahjahanpur), Kaseri (District Meerut), Attranji-Khera (District Etah), Lal-Qila (District Bulandshahar), Rajpur-parsu (District Bijnor), Bahadrabad (District Saharanpur) and Kosambi (District Allahabad).

A number of primitive types of copper implements of proto-historic significance were discovered in caches from the surface soil, or in possessions of individuals and temples from various parts of India, mainly Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. The artifacts include rings, harpoons[4], flat and shouldered celts[5], anthropomorphs[6], bar-cells[7] and trunnion axes, socketed axes, double axe, antennae swords, hooked swords, spear heads, etc.[8]. Most of these implements were chance discoveries without any associated artifacts from sites like Bithur, Hardoi, Manpuri, Dhaka, RajpurParsu, Indilapur, Bahadrabad, sartholi, Seorajpur, Bisauli, Fatehgarh, Kiratpur, Saipai, Navadatoli, Gungeria, etc.

Heine[9]considered these copper hoards as representing the remains of the Aryan migration into India, Piggott[10] and Sharma[11], however related these more to Harappan refugees. The trunnion axes were in typology and make similar to those of Transcaucasia; likewise the axe-adze to the Danubian ones, and antennae swords to Koban examples.

Lal[12] showed that the trunnion axes, Fort Monroe Sword, socketed axe, and

axe-adze were absent in the copper hoards found in the Doab region of Gangetic Valley, while harpoon, barcelt and anthropomorphs were confined to the Doab region only. Lal's list included flat and shouldered celts, barcelts, double axes antennae swords, harpoons, hooked swords, and anthropomorphs. Two double edge axes from Bhagrapir (Orissa) were up to 40 cm wide with edges only 1-3 mm thick, could not be applicable as axes, exceptfor catching fish in water. Amita Roy (personal conversation with Dr. D. P. Agarwal), reported five such double-edge axes from Kangsavati Valley in Bengal. Flat-shouldered axes were reported from all over India and abroad. The hook sword appeared to be a distinctive type with median ridge and hook chiselled out from the tang. The Harappan examples used a hole instead of hook for shafting. Navadatoli specimens do not have barb, and the median ridge is quite diffused compared to Copper Hoard examples. The hook sword was accompanied by anthropomorphs and antennae sword. The hoard at Sarthavli, Bahadrabad, and Fatehgarh had anthropomorphswith harpoons.

There are two varieties of the harpoons, one cut from a thick sheet and other cast in a double mould and appeared to be an instrument of fish hunting in great river waters or of game as shown in a rock shelter in Mirzapur.

Alternate swords 42-75 cm in length had antennae bifurcations at the hilt end, are reported from doab zone. At Kallur in Andhra Pradesh these had very short antennae. From Mehsana (Gujarat) four such swords were reported with the antennae beaten and flattered for mounting. From Chandoli was found a dagger instead of a sword. From Daimabad also four massive objects all solid cast, and weighting over 60 kg came in light[13].

At Bisauli harpoons and anthropomorphs were found together; at Bithur antennae swords and harpoons were associated, while at Fatehgarh an antennae sword and anthropomorphswere found together. Sarthauli, Bahadrabad and Nioro were other sites from where these implements have been reported. From Midnapore (Hardoi) some flat celts had bull figurine engraved near the butt ends.

The barcelt, 60 cm, is thought to have been used as crowbar for digging copper ores; these were reported from copper rich area of Bihar. One such celt is also reported from T. Narsipur (A.P.).

Copper implements from southern and eastern sites of Bihar and Bengal include shouldered and flat axes and rings. The bar celt type of this group is missing in the Doab. One sample of this group is from Gungeriain in theBalaghat district of Madhya Pradesh[14].

That the Bahadrabad, Nasirpur, Bisauli copper hoards were really associated with OCP ceramic complex was established by the excavations at Saipai. In Rajasthan, Haryana and Western U.P., the Harappan influence is distinct. A Doab-type harpoon was reported from Mitathal (Haryana). From Khurdi in Rajasthan, celts of Hoard type were found with copper pans of Harappan types[15].

As to alloying, Lal[16] reported the Doab copper hoard to be free of tin, yet, Smith[17] reported high grade bronze in examples of it from the British Museum. Arsenic also was present in the doab as well as in the Harappan implements. That the mid-doab, though free of ore sites, should have had a distinctive and advanced typology, is puzzling.

So far Heine[18] and Allchin[19] have associated the Copper Hoards with the Indic Aryans, while Piggott[20] thought them to be the work of Harappan refugees; and Lal[21] considered the authors to be the aboriginal tribes of India.

To determine the chronological horizon of this culture a dozen sherds from four sites, Atranjikhera, LalQila, Jhinjhana and Nasirpur were examined and dated between 2600 and 1200 B.C.[22]. Different dates so far available from these sites are given below:

THERMOLUMINISCENCE DATES

Site	Sample	T. L. Age
Antranjikhera	111-b.4	1610 BC
Antranjikhera	-b.5	1170 BC
Antranjikhera	111-c.1	2280 BC
Antranjikhera	111-c.2	1250 BC
Antranjikhera	-c.3	2130 BC
LalQilla	112-a.1	1730 BC
LalQila	112-a.2	2030 BC
LalQila	-a.3	1990 BC
Jhinjhana	113-b.1	1570 BC
Jhinjhana	113-b.2	2650 BC
Nasirpur	114-a.1	1500 BC
Nasirpur	114-a.2	1180 BC

The occurrence of a fragment of an anthropomorphic figure at Lothal is suggestive of a date around 1900 B.C.[23]. Finally two 14C dates are available from Jodhpura. PRL at Ahmedabad produced a date between 2500 and 2200 BC for Copper OCP levels at Jodhpura, and Agarwal and Kusumgar[24]named this culture as Jodhpura culture of the Pre-Harappan period. The beginning of OCP at Jodhpura may be pushed to 2700-2800 B.C.[25].

Thus, this culture was widespread in an area ranging from west Bengal and

Orissa in the east to Gujarat and Haryana in the west and from Andhra Pradesh in the South to Uttar Pradesh in the north. In all, the largest hoards come from Madhya Pradesh. [1].

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Fig. 1

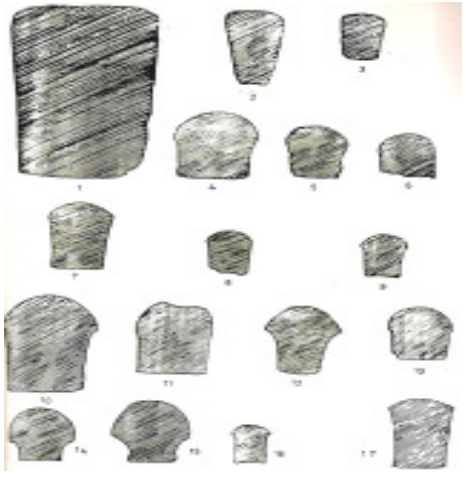

Fig. 2

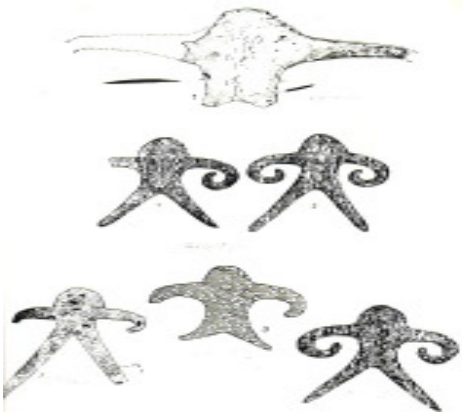

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

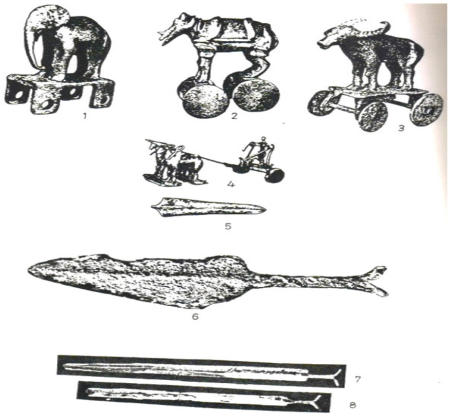

Fig. 6

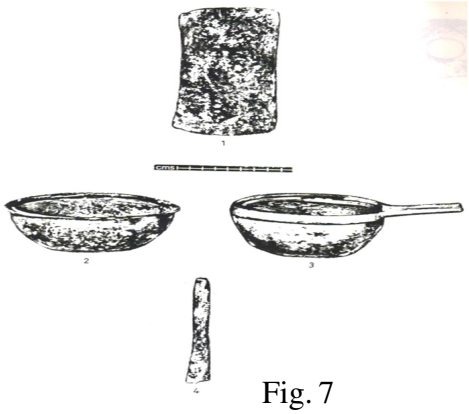

Fig. 7