

# **The Cultural Geography of Kot Dijians on the Indus and Beyond: A Comparative Analysis of Kot Diji and Sarai Khola Pottery Assemblages**

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## **Abstract**

*Kot Diji culture refers to the prehistoric people of the Indo-Pak subcontinent, predating the urban Harappan (Indus Valley) Civilization. This is called the pre-Harappan period, which began around 3300 BCE and continued until 2800-2600 BCE. It was first identified at the site of Kot Diji in 1958, with a distinguished craft and technological sophistication, and a simple but standardized living style with homes made mainly of stone and mudbrick. The ceramic style differs from that of the Harappans, with commonly thin, lightweight, short-necked, short-rimmed vessels, wide black colour bands on the neck, community ovens, and fortifications. Moreover, until the 1970s, the geographical limits of the Kot Dijian occupation were considered to be in Sindh. But now, throughout the Indus region and beyond, the Kot Dijian occupation has been discovered, for example, at Burzahom, Kashmir; Kunal, Haryana; Gujarat; Cholistan; Baluchistan; Tuchi Gomal in the Gomal Valley; and Sindh. This essay relies on pottery specimens from the Kot Diji and Sarai Khola sites because, based on regional variation, the same period and culture spread across a large landmass with various geographical and ecological zones, exploiting its resources. Now, in this paper, we are comparing this cultural expansion to the wider limits, ever happened to any culture before the existence Kot Dijians.*

**Keywords:** Kot Diji, Sarai Khola, Cultural Geography, Early Harappan, Indus Civilization.

## **1. Introduction**

Prehistoric records from the Indo-Pak subcontinent indicate that several civilisations gradually emerged from early nomadic societies. This evidence has been documented through multiple disciplinary approaches. For example, it is now established that the Harappan Civilisation was developed by populations inhabiting the Indus plains and western highlands, extending to the modern borders of Pakistan and Iran (Possehl 1986). As Mughal states that “at Mohen jo Daro [...] during the initial excavations in the 1920’s and early 1930’s, the archaeologists recovered early materials from two deep pits, but they did not, at that time, understand that these materials were significantly different from the mature Harappan materials. Then, in 1932, E. J. H. Mackay found some potsherds in a pit 42 feet deep, potsherds which he assigned to ‘early’ levels” (Mughal 1974: 107).

Prevailing paradigms regarding the evolution of the Indus Civilization shifted significantly after the late 1950s and further evolved during the 1970s, when Mughal identified distinct cultures in the Cholistan and Baluchistan regions that predated the Mature Harappan phase of the Indus Civilization. Mughal introduced the term “Early Harappan” to describe these cultures, which emerged in a developed and organized manner from the mid-fourth millennium BCE (Mughal 1970; 1974). In those cultures, the Kot Diji and Amri were the more advanced, and the Kot Diji expanded over a large area in the early third millennium BCE and eventually merged into the urban Harappan/Indus about 2600 BCE. This paper discusses the Kot Dijian expansion, whether it was an occupational expansion or was merely trade interconnectedness with other existing communities in different South Asian region majorly in Sindh, Baluchistan, KPK, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Haryana.

As trade interactions extended beyond the Indus Valley Civilisation, the exchange of goods among early Harappan communities facilitated the emergence of a more advanced and organised system (Mallah *et. al.* 2002). This process contributed to the formation of one of the world's most significant and ancient civilisations. Although contemporary civilisations exhibited their own advancements, their primary interactions remained commercial. Sindh, or the lower Indus Valley, provided a substantial food-producing environment but lacked most natural resources aside from soil and water. In contrast, highland regions contained more abundant resources or raw materials. A pattern established during the early Harappan Kot Diji period and persisting into the Mature Harappan phase, as demonstrated at sites such as Mohenjo-Daro, Chanhu Daro, Kot Diji, and other locations in Sindh with Kot Diji occupation.

This research presents a comparative analysis of the cultural geography of the Kot Dijian people. Pottery styles characteristic of the Kot Diji period have been analysed from two principal sites: Kot Diji, located on the left bank of the Palaeochannel of the Indus River in Khairpur district, Sindh, and a site in the Upper Indus Valley within the Pothohar Plateau. These sites are approximately 900 kilometres apart. The study correlates the pottery assemblages from both locations to assess whether the Kot Dijian cultural material at Sarai Khola indicates permanent settlement or reflects trade interactions. Furthermore, the research reexamines data from collections maintained by the Exploration and Excavation Branch, Culture, Tourism, Antiquities and Archives Department, Government of Sindh, to elucidate potential interregional trade and technological connections during the late fourth millennium BCE and the subsequent urban Harappan period. This study presents a reanalysis of pottery from the Kot Diji site, which was originally excavated in 1955 by F. A. Khan. While preliminary results were published, these findings have provided the basis for subsequent interpretations of settlement history and the transition to the Urban Indus. Recent developments in material culture studies now facilitate more detailed investigations into Early Indus

settlement patterns (Flam 1981). The Kot Diji collection is currently housed in several museums in Pakistan, including the National Museum in Karachi and the Islamabad Museum.

Site	Layer/Period	Dates	
<b>Kot Diji</b>	Period 1, 1A- 1D to 3A	Harappan	
	Period 4, 4A-5A to 16 including 4A	Kot Dijian	
<b>Sarai Khola</b>	Period IV	Early Medieval	
	Period III	Iron Age- Cemetery	
	Period 11	Kot Diji	
	Period I	Late Neolithic, beginning of Kot Diji	
<b>Harappa</b>	Period V	Late Harappan	1800-1300 BC
	Period IV	Transitional Phase	1900-1800 BC
	Period III	Harappan Phase	2600-1900 BC
	Period II	Kot Diji	2800-2600 BC
	Period I	Ravi/Hakra Phase	3300-2800 BC
<b>Gumla</b>	Period V & VI	Later Occupation	
	Period IV	Harappan	
	Period III	Kot Dijian	
	Period II	Chalcolithic	
	Period I	Pre-Ceramic	
<b>Mehrgarh</b>	Period VII	Kot Diji Ware	Mid-3 <sup>rd</sup> mil.
		Late Quetta ware	Mid-3 <sup>rd</sup> mil.

Table 1 - The table presents the periodization of selected major sites based on their stratigraphy, arranged from bottom to top.

## 2. Location of the Sites and the previous works

Sarai Khola is located near the Taxila Museum, approximately 200 meters west of the Kala Nala bridge, on the Grand Trunk Road, and three kilometres southwest of Bhir Mound. The site was discovered in December 1967 by Muhammad Sharif. The first excavation season began on 17 January 1968 and continued until 15 May 1968, with subsequent seasons resuming until March 1971. (Halimi 1971). Halim published preliminary results in 1967 in the *Journal of Pakistan Archaeology*. The discovery of prehistoric occupations at the site Sarai Khola has changed the

Marshal's speculation based on his twenty-six years of experience in the excavations and explorations dedicated to the Gandhara Civilisation in Taxila Valley, that "no prehistoric settlement existed in the Taxila Valley" (Halim 1971).

Moreover, the systematic and detailed results of the excavations were then published in the *Journal of Pakistan Archaeology* 1970-71, number 7. The four major periods were revealed, period II was assigned to Kot Diji, and the following period I was designated red burnished wares (Hamil 1971). Moreover, the material remains from period II included flint blades, stone celts, human and animal figurines, bangles, rattles made of terracotta, and the most prominent part of this collection was typical Kot Dijian pottery (see fig 5). The site of Kot Diji was first discovered by Madhu Sarup Vats during explorations in the former princely state of Khairpur (Vats 1938), and later revisited by G. S. Ghurye, who identified it as a prehistoric settlement but did not define the Kot Diji Culture (Ghurye 1936). The discovery of the site is thus attributed to the first half of the twentieth century. Subsequent large-scale excavations were conducted by the Department of Archaeology and Museums of Pakistan under the direction of F. A. Khan (Khan, 1964), who first to associate the earliest occupations at the site with the pre-Harappan period. The sophisticated craft technologies evident in the cultural material, such as pottery and architectural remains, illuminate the development of early urban societies that preceded the Indus Civilisation (Mughal 1970).

### **3. Geographical Extent and Distribution Pattern**

The precise centre or core region of the Kot Dijian culture remains difficult to determine. However, evidence suggests that the core area was likely located in Sindh along the Indus River and its palaeochannels. This inference is based on the presence of standardised stone fortifications set upon bedrock, as well as mud brick and stone houses within these fortifications, which are clearly associated with Kot levels at the site of Kot Diji<sup>1</sup> (Khan 1964). Comparable features have not been identified elsewhere, except for pottery and other cultural materials. Notably, no single mapped boundary or defined radius has been published for the entire Kot Dijian culture (Fig. 1b). Drawing on the published materials, we have addressed this issue in our discussion.

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<sup>1</sup> F. A. Khan reports that "there is no evidence to show that Harappans used the fortification wall" and suggests that the fortification was constructed by the Kot Dijian community. Khan further notes that the wall was reinforced with bastions and that the top of the wall was "disused" by the Harappan people. He also observes a burnt or ashy layer throughout the excavation area, which separates the Harappan and Kot Dijian occupations. Based on his analysis, Khan implies that the Harappan people did not match the Kot Dijian community in terms of technological advancement and craftsmanship.

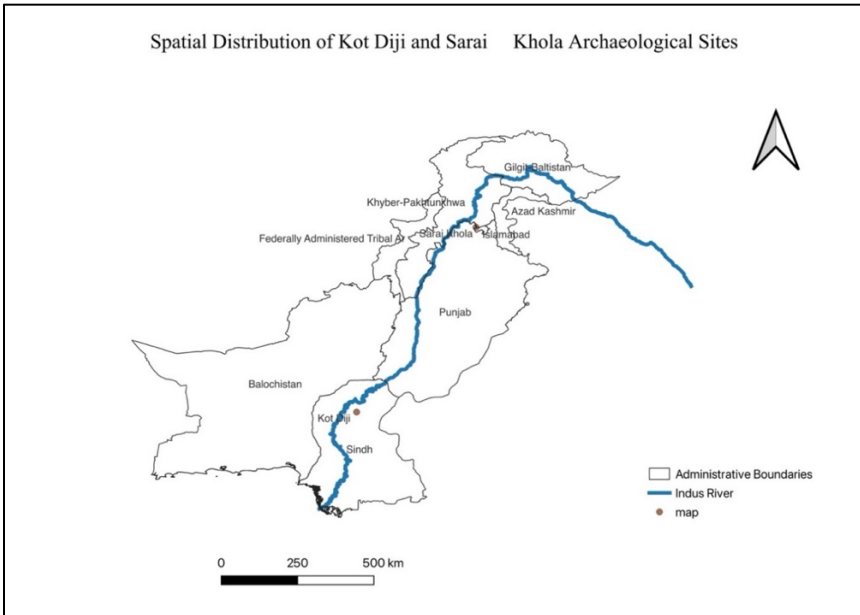


Fig. 1a - Thematic map of sites along Indus River.

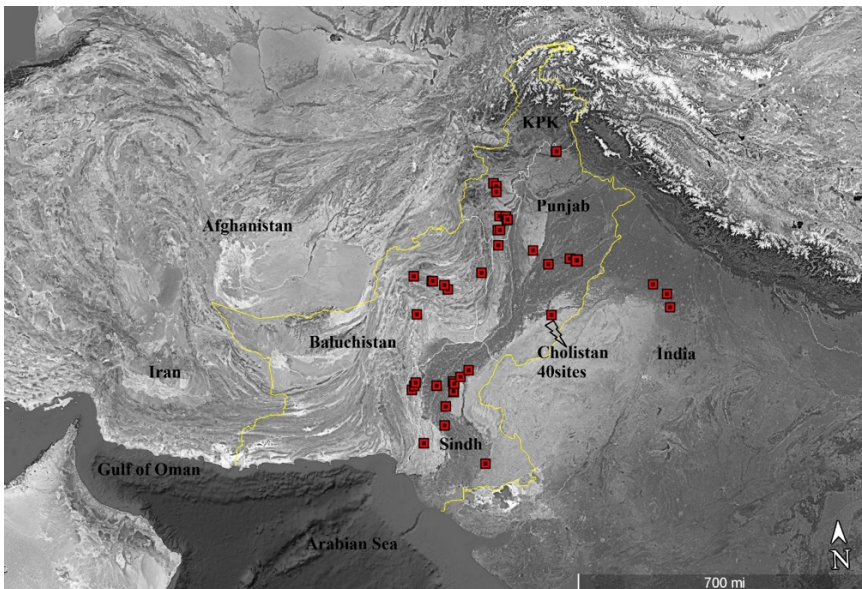


Fig. 1b - Settlement pattern, and the distribution of Kot Diji culture.

Outside of Sindh, evidence for the full establishment of the Kot Diji culture remains limited. Its presence in other regions likely reflects connections, particularly through trade in raw materials, as observed in the mid-third millennium BCE. The Indus Civilization acquired raw materials from diverse areas, and a comparable pattern is apparent during the Kot Diji cultural phase. For instance, the discovery of a pot from Kashmir depicting a Horned deity characteristic of Kot Diji suggests such trade connections (Lahiri 2017). While additional research is necessary, current findings indicate that the Kot Diji culture maintained a transitional association with the Indus Urban period in Sindh. In other regions, including Tuchi-Gomal in the Gomal Valley, Baluchistan, Gujarat, Haryana, and Cholistan, the Kot Diji culture either overlaps with or transitions into other cultural phases. For example, at Rehman Dheri, it is associated with the Tuchi-Gomal phase, and at Siswal, it overlaps with the Suthi-Siswal phase, but not with the Harappan or Indus period. This leads us to assume that probably the core region of the Kot Dijian culture was the Sindh region.

The Kot Dijian, or early Harappan period, is also identified from pre-defence levels at Harappa (Mughal 1974). Characteristic Kot Dijian ceramics have been found at Dam Sadat I-II, dated to the early third millennium BCE, which corresponds to the chronology of the Kot Dijian culture. Evidence suggests that the Kot Dijian people maintained either possible links or permanent settlements in both central and northern Baluchistan. Early wet wares at Mohenjo-daro have been discovered in association with “Kot Dijian wares.” The Kot Dijian culture is generally dated between 3155 and 2590 BCE (Mughal 1974). Additional evidence of Kot Dijian occupation has been identified at Kalibangan, Siswal, Mitathal, and Surkotada in India, as well as at Gumla in the Gomal Valley on the Gomal River plain in northwestern Pakistan (Mughal 1974). Mughal has reported forty Kot Dijian sites in Cholistan, located between Derawar and Fort Abbass (Mughal, 1997). Prior to the Kot Dijian occupation, the region was inhabited by the Hakra people. In India, stratified evidence for Kot Dijian levels has been identified at Kalibangan<sup>2</sup> (Thapar 1975; Lal 1979), Mitathal I and Rakhi Shahpur (Bhan, 1975), Kunal. Additional sites have also revealed Kot Dijian levels. In Pakistan, references to Kot Diji levels are found in the stratified contexts of the Kot Diji site itself (Khan 1964; Mughal 1970), Jalilpur (Mughal 1974), Jhang (Mughal 1972), Gumla (Dani 1970-71:1-177 Rehman Dheri (Durrani 1981).

Until 2001, Khan (2002) provided a list that included only eight sites from Sindh, located in the Indus Plains, Thar Desert, and Kirthar piedmont (Khan, 2002). In Baluchistan, only four sites are listed, while Punjab has forty-seven sites, with forty situated in the Cholistan Desert (Mughal, 1997; Khan, 2002). Additionally, six sites from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK, formerly NWFP) are mentioned. The Kashmir valley is notably absent from this list, despite evidence

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<sup>2</sup> *Indian Archaeology: A Review*, from 1961 to 1964, 1967 to 1969.

of Kot Dijian links in Kashmir, such as a ceramic jar depicting a horned deity, which is characteristic of Kot Dijian ceramics. According to Khan, this list is based exclusively on “ceramic evidence.” In contrast, Shaikh, Mallah, and Vesar (2002) present a list of Kot Dijian sites that includes twenty-nine locations: one in the Rohri hills and twenty-eight in the Thar Desert (Shaikh *et. al.* 2002). After Kot Diji site the mounded and stratified settlements which have been so far excavated from Sindh are Lol Mari Taloor-ji-Bhit, Bhir (Shaikh *et al.* 2002) Nuhato<sup>3</sup>. From Baluchistan’s Lorlai District nine Kot Dijian sites have been discovered (Zahir and Khan 2021). The Kot Diji Culture is distinguished by its unique pottery designs, which include short-necked vessels with short rims and red ware featuring black painted motifs such as interlacing and fish scale patterns (Shaffer & Thapar 1992). Excavations also revealed a fortification wall (Khan 1964), indicating that the society relied on agriculture and animal domestication. These findings suggest the presence of early but developed economic structures that laid the groundwork for the later Urban Harappan civilisation. The Kot Dijian pottery styles in both places exhibit remarkable stylistic similarities, suggesting common trade routes, raw material procurement, and craftsmanship, according to a comparative analysis of the artefacts. The discovery of semi-precious stones and bead-making tools at Sarai Khola contributes to our knowledge of early interregional connections, especially trade routes between northern Punjab and the wider Indus Valley region.

The given above map (Fig. 1a) exhibits the geolocation of both sites i.e. Kot Diji and Sarai Khola Sindh and Punjab respectively with reference to Indus River as well as provincial boundaries of Pakistan. Meanwhile map shows that the Kot Diji is on lower basin however, Sarai Khola is near the Taxila valley on elevated region allowing for the visual comparison of their position along potential trade and communication routes. This spatial perspective helps clarify how environmental features, like river system, may have influenced the movement and exchange of goods, raw materials and ideas between these two regions. In this regard by placing both sites within the same cartographic frame it will help us to interpret the resemblance and differences in their pottery styles and assessing the significance of interregional connections during the late fourth and early 3<sup>rd</sup> millennia BCE.

#### **4. The Material Description**

The material selected for this study is derived from the pottery styles of both Kot Diji and Sarai Khola. A comparison of pottery types between Kot Diji and period II at Sarai Khola reveals strong similarities in rim shapes, texture, colour, rim diameter ratios, and thickness, as exemplified by a large jar’s rim (Fig. 5). Notably, during excavations at Kot Diji, F. A. Khan observed that semi-precious stone beads

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<sup>3</sup> Excavation of Nuhato Site of Indus Valley Civilization (Excavation Report).

were absent in the Kot Dijian or Early Harappan levels. Khan states, “semi-precious stone beads do not appear to have been in use before the Harappan period” (Khan 1965: 83). In contrast, several semi-precious stone beads, including both finished and unfinished carnelian beads, have been found at Sarai Khola (see Halim 1970).

The excavator of Sarai Khola reported the presence of unfinished and exotic semi-precious stone beads, stating that “it is likely that raw material was imported from elsewhere and beads were locally made at Sarai Khola” (Halim, 1970: 16). Although all evidence comes from period II at Sarai Khola, which is clearly associated with the Kot Diji culture occupation at the site, the style and characteristics of these stone beads are consistent with the Harappan bead-making tradition (Kenoyer 2001).

Sherd type SK-07, distinguished by grooved lines, closely resembles those found in early Harappan levels, particularly period II at Harappa (Ahmad *et al.* 2023; Fig. 14 b). Period II at Harappa corresponds to the Kot Dijian period, which Kenoyer dates to 2800–2600 BCE. Although Kot Dijian culture pottery displays some local variation, the excavator notes that pottery at Kot Diji was produced locally (Khan 2002). Published observations state that “the Kot Dijian pottery from various sites differ little from each other, except some local variants, like the horizontal grooved vessels found in pre-Indus levels at Harappa, Jalilpur, and Sarai Khola” (Khan 2002: 58).

Minor variations in Kot Diji pottery are observed at Thar Desert Sindh settlements located east of the Kot Diji site (Khan 2002; Mallah 2008, 2018). The evidence indicates specialised craftsmanship, high-quality ceramics, sophisticated decorations, and the development of distinctive motifs such as the pipal leaf, fish scale, and interlacing patterns. These features demonstrate both inspiration from nature and the advanced skills of early Indus artisans. Although techniques and vessel forms may have diffused from the region where the Kot Dijian culture originated, the precise area of origin remains uncertain. Shaffer conceptualises the emergence of the Indus Civilisation as a process of regionalisation, with Kot Diji recognised as a prominent cultural community associated with long-distance trade.

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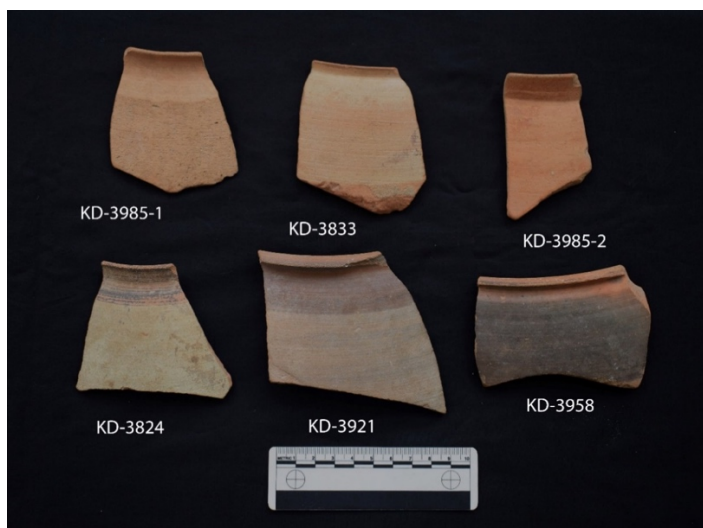


Fig. 2 - Typical Kot Dijian pottery styles from Kot Diji Site (Photo by Ali M).



Fig. 3 - Sherds from Kot Diji Site, Sherd type KD-3951 can be placed in the late Kot Dijian period its rime style slightly differs from typical Kot Dijian style, however the wide black band can be seen, it can be associated with first Indus period. KD-2260 is a plate rim piece unique to other Kot Diji styles it is pained in light brown on bright gray background between the bands along rim the sherd has yellow background. (Photo by Ali M)

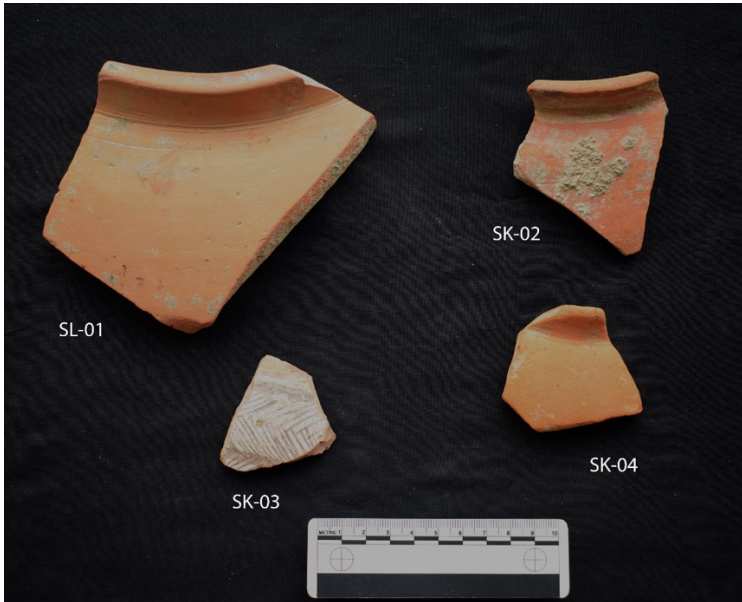
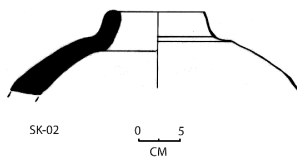
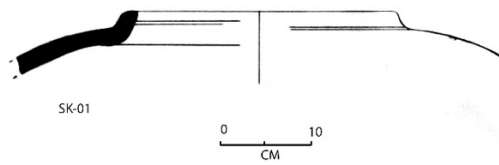
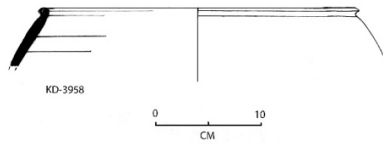
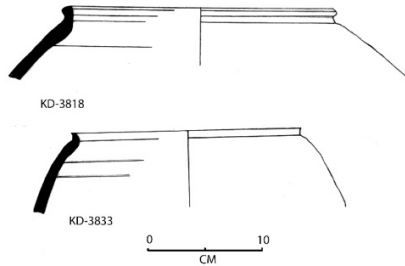
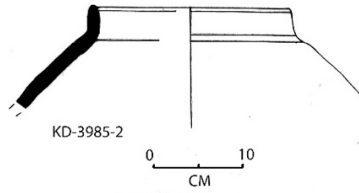
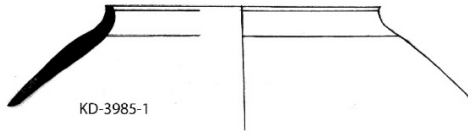


Fig. 4 - Sarai Khola typical Kot Dijian pottery forms (Ali M).



Fig. 5 - Sarai Khola SK-07 is a variant of the Kot Dijian vessels forms from Punjab sites such as Harappa, Jalilpur.



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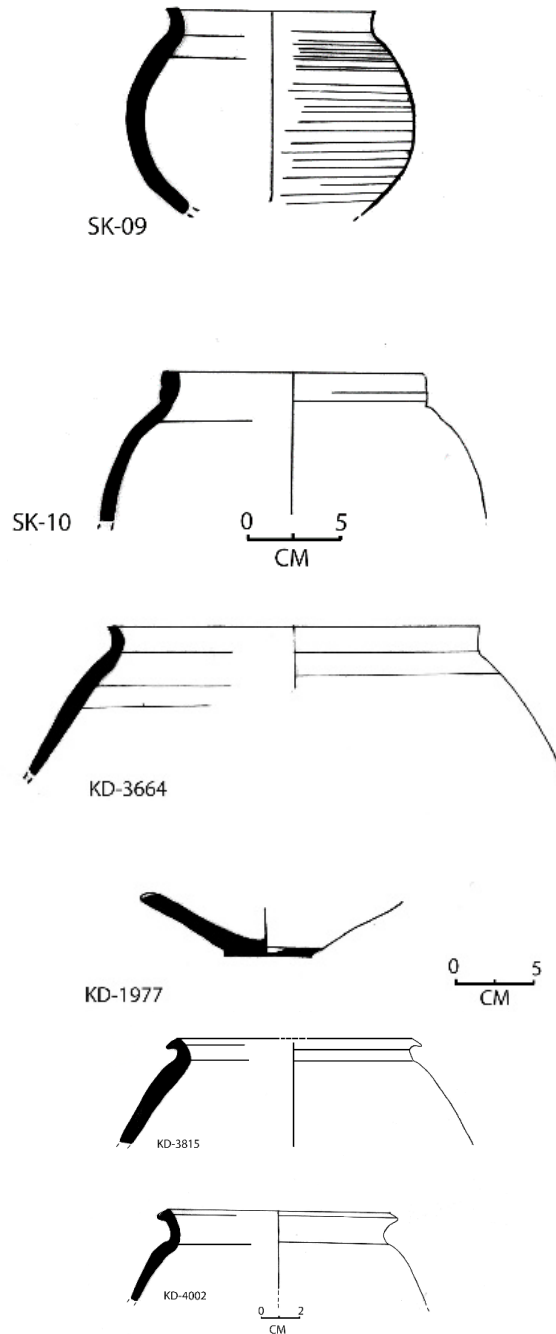


Fig. 6 - KD stands for Kot Diji; SK stands for Sarai Khola. Rim shapes of the stylistic pottery from both sites Kot Diji and Sarai Khola (Drawings by Ali M).

## **5. A Discussion**

The origins of strategic urban Harappan trade can be traced to earlier village and town settlements in the Indus Valley. During the Kot Diji period, settlement patterns exhibited a wide distribution extending beyond the Indus River basin into regions such as north Baluchistan, the Bannu Basin (now in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), the Taxila Valley (including sites like Sarai Khola), the Cholistan Desert (Mughal 1997), the Thar Desert, and the Indus Alluvial plains (Mallah, 2008; Mallah & Qasid 2018). This period of cultural expansion was characterised by the development of systems for extracting diverse raw materials and products (Possehl 1986; Kenoyer 1995, 2006; Shaffer & Lichtenstein 1995). Trade intensified during the Mature Harappan phase and persisted until the decline of the Indus Civilisation (Mughal, 1989, 1990; Miller 2008). The urban Harappan trade system likely resulted from the efforts of Early Harappan groups, such as the Kot Dijian and other early Harappan peoples. Interregional cultural connections also expanded significantly, reaching from the Indus Plains to central and northern Baluchistan, parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa such as Swat, Bannu Basin and also concentrated in and around Taxila valley and Pothohar Plateau including Jhang and almost entire Punjab.

The Bannu Archaeological Project has significantly contributed to understanding prehistoric settlement history and the development of Indus urbanism by illuminating early Harappan cultural groups, particularly Kot Diji. Excavations at the Lewan site in Bannu revealed evidence of bead production and distinctive pottery characteristics associated with the Kot Dijian context. The three major occupational phases identified are Sher Khan Tarakai (4500–3000 BCE), Tochi-Gomal (3300–3000 BCE), and Kot Diji (3000–2800 BCE) (Durrani 1995; Morris & Thomas 2002). Collectively, these findings suggest the presence of advanced village life undergoing processes of urbanisation.

Due to its extensive reach, the Kot Diji culture was connected to broader cultural trends within the greater Indus Valley and surrounding regions. Its manufacturing techniques, ornamental motifs, and ceramics closely resemble those found in the Gomal Plain, the Bannu Basin, and northern Baluchistan (Fairservis 1967, 1975; Mughal 1970; Zahir & Khan 2020). The widespread distribution of Kot Diji artifacts indicates the existence of a sophisticated system of communication and interaction among communities. Transitional elements identified at Lewan further demonstrate that Kot Diji culture represented a cultural continuum, incorporating Tochi-Gomal and earlier phases. These findings suggest that the Kot Diji culture played a crucial role in bridging and shaping local cultures, thereby facilitating the broader urbanisation processes later observed in the Indus Valley civilisation. The widespread adoption of the Kot Diji culture likely promoted technological innovation and cultural exchange across a significant portion of the subcontinent.

This study also reviews cultural and trade interactions. Evidence of bead-making at Sarai Khola during the Kot Diji occupational level (period II) indicates the use of non-local semi-precious stones, including the discovery of a long cylindrical preform carnelian bead. Additionally, lapis lazuli has been identified at Sarai Khola, also associated with the period II Kot Diji occupation (Halim 1970). The Cultural from Hakra to Kot Diji period is well documented from Thar Desert such the Lol Mari, Taloor-ji-Bhit, Bhir, Dubi4, Dubi5, Ganero8 and Kandharki (Shaikh at al. 2002). Ther all sites are important and are mounded settlements in the nature representing a continuous occupation at least from the Mesolithic period.

At Sarai Khola, the transition from the Neolithic period to the introduction of pottery and, subsequently, to the Kot Dijian cultural phase was first identified in 1968 by Muhammad Abdul Halim<sup>4</sup> The excavator at Sarai Khola designated the lower strata as “pre-Kot Dijian” levels. Regionally, evidence suggests that Paleolithic populations inhabited the Soan Valley for an extended period, gradually transitioning from a hunting-and-gathering lifestyle to a sedentary existence<sup>5</sup> passing the Mesolithic and later the Neolithic periods. This transformation is supported by findings at Sarai Khola. Comparable developments are observed in the Sindh region, where the Rohri Hills, the hills in Karachi and Thatta, as well as the plains and the Thar Desert, contributed to the evolution of the Kot Diji Culture. In particular, Mesolithic evidence has been discovered in the sand dunes of eastern Sindh in the Upper Thar Desert, around lakes, and in the small plains of the Thar Desert which latter transformed into sedentary life in the shape of different cultures such as Hakra (Mughal 1999), Ravi (Kenoyer 1997), Kot Diji (Khan 2002).

The distribution pattern of the Kot Dijian culture (Fig. 1b) is demonstrated by its widespread presence across modern Pakistan, as well as the Indian states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Kashmir. The entire region of Sindh was also occupied by the Kot Dijian people, who are considered direct ancestors of the urban communities of the Indus Civilisation, including rulers, traders, and artisans. Trade became increasingly significant and expanded considerably during the early third millennium BCE, coinciding with the Kot Dijian community's rapid transformation toward the first major urbanisation in South Asia. This process can be described as "rapid urbanisation" because, in contrast to other prehistoric cultures, hunter-gatherer societies required extended periods to develop and transform until the fourth millennium BCE. Following the Neolithic revolution, human settlements became permanent along riverbanks, in oases, and in areas where subsistence resources were readily available. The Indus plains and the broader Sindh region were particularly advantageous for settlement in prehistoric times due to easy access to land, water, and other subsistence resources, as well as

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<sup>4</sup> Pakistan Archaeology Journal for the first preliminary report in *Pakistan Archaeology* 1968: 29.

<sup>5</sup> This view is expressed by the Excavator of Sarai Khola in his Preliminary report, and this argument is supported to indigenous model for the cultural evolution.

extensive grazing plains. Consequently, much of Sindh was extensively utilised during the Kot Diji period, facilitating the emergence of Indus Urbanism.

Radiocarbon dating conducted at the Lewan site by the Institute of Archaeology, UCL, yielded four chronological estimates for the Kot Diji cultural sequence based on four samples. The first sample is dated between 2920 and 2680 BCE. The second sample is dated between 2870 and 2600 BCE, and the third sample falls between 2870 and 2570 BCE. The final, or uppermost, sample is dated between 2860 and 2580 BCE (Morris & Thomas 2002). These chronological ranges align with those established for the Kot Diji culture at other sites, such as Chanhu jo Daro and Kot Diji. Mughal has also proposed a general time frame for the Kot Dijian culture, spanning the late fourth millennium BCE to the early third millennium BCE. The most widely accepted dates for the Kot Diji culture range from 3300 to 2800–2600 BCE.

## **6. Conclusions**

This study examines the expansion of the Kot Dijian culture, its duration, and the primary factors that contributed to its development and transformation into the urban society of the Indus Valley during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BCE. Pottery specimens from two principal sites, Kot Diji and Sarai Khola, which represent the culture in its early stage and demonstrate cultural continuity, are analysed. Previous research based on these sites shifted the prevailing view regarding the origins of the Indus Valley civilisation, confirming that it evolved from earlier cultures that existed a millennium before its mature phase, with Kot Diji being the most extensively developed. Comparative analysis of vessel forms from Sarai Khola and Kot Diji highlights the intricate trade and cultural networks characteristic of early Harappan societies. These sites provide evidence that the urban Harappan civilisation was founded upon the advanced craft technologies and trade systems of the Kot Dijian culture and other contemporary regional groups. The findings indicate that the Kot Dijian phase played a significant role in shaping broader regional interactions within the Indus Valley.

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