

## Bārā Culture: An Overview of Problems and Issues

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### Abstract:

*Bārā culture was a culture that emerged in the eastern region of the Indus Valley Civilization around 2000 BC. It developed in the doab between the Yamunā and Sutlej rivers, this territory corresponds to modern-day Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh in North India. Bārā culture is believed to have initially developed from Pre-Harappan traditions independently, although later on intermingled with the Harappans in locations. In the conventional timeline demarcations of the Indus Valley Tradition, the Bārā culture is usually placed in the Late Harappan period. The Bārān pottery is thickly distributed in the Sutlej and Ghaghara basins. From this hub centre of the culture it has spread on the Sarasvatī and Driśdvatī in Haryana and to the Yamunā-Gangā doab in western Uttar Pradesh.*

*The painted designs of Bārān ware recall the Pre-Harappan designs from north Baluchistan, Bahawalpur, Sind and Ganganagar areas. So, this poses a problem among the archaeologists regarding the origin and expansion of this culture. Bārān ware plausibly is a local version or variable of 'Pre-Indus pottery', perhaps a near cognate of pre-defence Harappan ware which shows many traits with these various contemporary Chalcolithic cultures. In the Chautāng valley Bārān ware is largely comparable to Siswālian ware. Bārā-Siswālian ware is a long-lived ceramic with Early Harappan motifs carrying the entire sequence in Divide. So, it is called Bārā-Siswālian pottery tradition. As far as the excavated sites of this culture are concerned, at the sites like Mahorānā, Kotlā-Nihang-Khān, Ropar, Bārā, Sanghol, Bālu, Mirzāpur,*

*Jognākherā, Bhagwānpurā, Daulatpur, Mitāthal, Alamgirpur, Bargaon, Hulās, etc., the family uniformity in techniques, features of typology and decoration in pottery assemblages are found near Bārā-Siswālian traditions. The regional*

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*characteristics of material culture of Bārā-Siswālians show that they were agriculturists who used to supply food grain to the people belonged to Harappa culture, as indicate by the small size of Bārā-Siswālian settlements around the Harappan urban centres. They were also engaged in small scale industrial activities. They used to get raw materials, etc., from the urban areas or from nomads and supply their products to the people belonged to urban areas.*

**Key words:** Bārā-Siswālian, Sutlej-Yamunā divide, Yamunā-Gangā doab, intermingled, Sarasvatī-Driśdvatī, Chautāng valley, expansion, conventional, resemblance, typology, Bārān Ware, Early Siswal, Late Siswal, Ochre Coloured Pottery, Painted Grey Ware, Cemetery-H, Pre-Defence, Sothi Culture, Baluchi Culture

**Introduction:** Bārā culture is named after the type site of Bārā (Punjab), from where initial evidence for its existence was discovered. This culture developed in the region near the Shivālik hills in Ropar (Punjab). Bārā, Mahorānā, Dher Mājṛā and Sanghol are other important Bārā cultural sites in Punjab that have been excavated. Bārān ware is also a long-lived ceramic with Early Harappan motifs carrying through the entire sequence in Sutlej-Ghaghara basins. Therefore, this area is assumed as the hub centre of the culture and from here it has spread on the Sarasvatī-Driśdvatī in Haryana and to the Yamunā-Gangā doab in the western Uttar Pradesh. In the Chautāng valley, Bārān ware is largely comparable to Siswālian ware. So, it is called Bārā-Siswālian pottery

tradition. In Sarasvatī and Driśdvatī valley it is also known as Bārā-Siswālian culture.

The regional characteristics of Bārān/Siswālian material culture show that it was rural culture contemporary to Early Harappan, Harappan and Late Harappan cultural period. The absence of good settlement planning, road system, fortification, burnt-brick structures on raised platforms, systemic drainage etc., micro beads, typical copper objects, typical glossy red or buff slip, the classical Mature Harappan shapes such as the ‘S’ shaped painted vase, handled cup and the scored goblet and typical Harappan painted designs and graffiti marks of Harappan culture formed the base for the Bārā-Siswālian settlements as their existence as rural settlements. The small Bārā-Siswālian settlements might have been acted as a ‘supply area’ meet out the basic necessities of the urban centres. These Bārā-Siswālian settlements exported cereals and other products to the other areas of urban growth in Sutlej-Yamunā doab. The Cities were mainly service areas providing many services to rural settlements and received taxes. The cereals or agriculture products supplied by contemporary Bārā-Siswālian rural areas to Harappan cities gave impetus to craft specialization, which was a special quality of Harappan civilization. In this way, the Bārā-Siswālian sites were ‘producer sites’ and Harappan sites were ‘consumer sites’. There are about ninety eight percent of the rural sites in Harappan age in this area, while only two percent of the population dwelled in the urban areas.

### **Objective:**

- To understand the independent status of Bārā culture in spite of scarcity of data.

- To understand the significance of Bārā culture to resolve the issues regarding the status of origin and decline of Harappan culture in Sutlej-Yamunā divide.
- To understand the inter-regional interaction of the Bārāns on the basis of micro-level analysis of their pottery traditions.

### **Methodology:**

- In the absence of C-14 dates from all the Bārān culture sites, the study is based on analogical study of associated findings, specifically pottery traditions of Pre/Early, Mature and Late/Post Harappan cultures.
- A close resemblance with those found at Bārā not be an example of relationship of two areas and postulate any direct contact between the different Pre/Early Harappan cultures and the Bārāns. But, on the other side, the typological similarity in pottery traditions with the Bārān established some kind of culture contact.

**Origin of Bārā Culture:** In 1950's Y.D. Sharma carried out excavations in upper Sutlej area. The main excavated sites are Bārā, Kotlā-Nihang-Khān and Ropar. As a result of these excavations, three phases of Harappan culture were recognised. Here the pottery resemblance misleads thinking of that Bārān pottery as a character of Harappan pottery tradition. So, he considered Bārān a Harappan culture then. (**Indian Archaeology - A Review: 1953-54, p. 38; 1954-55, p. 59; 1956-57, p. 79**) But in 1960's he changed his views and see some 'family likeness between the Pre-Harappan Kalibangan and Bārān pottery. (**Y.D. Sharma 1971: p. 22**) But in 1970's he again changed his views and said 'Bārā' culture have an independent label and it is a distinct culture and its antecedents traceable in Pre-Harappan tradition. (**Y.D. Sharma 1976: p. 5**) In the absence of firm and reasonable theory of origin of Bārā culture, the

opinions of R.S. Bisht and Y.D. Sharma plausibly throw some reflections on the beginning status of Bārān pottery tradition. R.S. Bisht says that “*the Bārān ware plausibly is a local version on variable of as yet unknown Pre-Indus pottery, perhaps a near cognate of Pre-defence Harappa ware which shows many a trait, with those of the various contemporary Chalcolithic cultures*”. (R.S. Bisht 2012: p.63) While Y.D. Sharma stated, “*it is possible that when the cognate Baluchi village cultures descent into the Indus plains, while some produced the urban Harappan society, others developed into a complimentary rural community*”. Subsequently, Y.D. Sharma opined that Bārā culture is a distinct culture and antecedents of which could be find out in Pre-Harappan cultures and to deserve to have an independent label in its own right. In the middle and upper levels of Bārā, it came into a limited contact with the Harappa culture with maintaining its independent status. (Y.D. Sharma 1975: p. 162)

So, in the starting history of Bārā culture its status was not clear, but now Bārā culture is considered to be a distinctive folk culture of Sutlej-Yamunā divide. It has been observed in pottery analysis that the Bārā-Siswālian ware evolved from Hākrā ware. Among the Hākrā ware, pottery with series of incised lines on the external surface, thin pots with everted rim and red ware painted with black on shoulders, or black slip covering most of the body, are available in Bārān pottery assemblage of Mahorānā. (Y.D. Sharma 1987: p. 173) Bārān pottery has as unique character in Sutlej-Yamunā valley as wet ware bases is a distinctive feature of Quetta wares; incised designs and multifarious looped bands on the interior of the rim of a basin, round shaped storage jar with long neck and splayed out rim, vase with long neck & beaded rim, wide mouthed jar with beaked rim and bowl with clubbed rim in the Zhob valley; painted motifs in northern Baluchistan; thin vases with wide black bands on neck in Pre-defence Harappa; dishes with disc or saggar base at Mohen-jo-daro.

(**Y.D. Sharma 1976: p. 11**) Accordingly, some attributes of Bārā-Siswālian ware would appear to be related, rather directly to the above Pre-Harappan tradition without the inter medium of Harappan culture. It can be assumed that the beginning and impetustoBārā culture appear to be derived from Pre-Harappan traditions. For some time, these Pre-Harappans and Bārāns have been co-existed and finally, Bārā-Siswālian has become permanent Indianized settlers of Sutlej-Yamunā valley. But the Harappan remained outsiders in this area and had a little impact on local ruler Bārā-Siswālian. They have occupied only Early-Harappan big settlements like Banawali, Mitāthal, Ropar, Rohirā, etc. The Bārā-Siswālian culture is regional in character, whereas the Harappan culture is extensively spread and shows uniformity in its style.

**Excavations at Bārā:** The ancient mound of Bara ( $30^{\circ} 17'$  and  $76^{\circ} 47'$ ), six kilometres south-west of Ropar (Punjab), excavated by Y. D. Sharma in 1955, 1971, 1973 and 1976. Although, the excavations revealed a four meters thick deposit related to a single culture, but having three-fold cultural phases – lower, middle and upper. The pottery repertoire is distinct with well levigated clay, wheel turned, having a slip of dull brownish colour with paintings in chocolate or brown colour and usually decorated with incised patterns. The Bārān pottery is profusely decorated with both geometric and naturalistic designs. The characteristic Bārān ware is present throughout all levels, but in the upper levels the repertoire of painted designs is poor and the incisions shallow. (**Y.D. Sharma 1982: p. 150**) The Harappan contacts observed from the middle levels where distinct Harappan pottery forms like scored Indus goblets, the elliptical goblet with footed base, the vase with button base, the beaker and perforated jar were encountered. (**A. Ghosh 1989: p. 49**) Though the excavator does not give any stratigraphic change in pottery, he divides the culture into Early Bārān and Late Bārān. Stratigraphically the Early Bārān had an independent existence



before the advent of the urban Harappan, in the middle levels continued to exist along with the urban Harappans. (Y.D. Sharma 1982: p. 150)

Houses were made of *kankar* stone and mud bricks with the Harappan ratio 4:2:1. Besides burnt clay plaster lumps with red impressions may indicate construction of wattleand daub houses too. An underground oval kiln, open on top was perhaps intended to have been used for firing objects of faience, such as bangles, beads and small balls, which is the most popular material used by Bārāns. While semi-precious stones like agate and carnelian were used on a restricted scale for the manufacture of beads. Copper was rare, and among the identified objects from Bārā may be named only a fishing hook and a fragmentary bangle. Other antiquities include terracotta cakes, bull figurines, bangles and beads; beads and bracelets of faience. (Y.D. Sharma 1982: p. 150)

**Characteristic features of Bārān pottery:** Pottery remnants of Bārā culture revealed a style that is consistently differentiable from that of the Harappan culture, though there are some shared features as well as, the resemblance misleads one into thinking that Bārā culture is a genetic descendant of the Harappan shapes, such as the Indus goblet with pointed, footed or pedestalled base, large storage jar with abruptly constricted lower profile. (A. Ghosh 1989: p. 49)

The Bārān pottery is made of well levigated clay and is treated with slip of dull brown colour. The Bārān pottery is comparatively sturdier and finer than the Mature Harappan (Mitāthal-IIB) pottery. The common shapes associated with Bārān pottery includes storage jar with bulbous body, long neck with flaring rim, collared rim and tapering shoulders; vessels (incised on shoulder and rusticated at bottom); vases with flanged rims high neck and globular body; small vases with high neck and globular body; pedestal bowls or basins; squat

vases with flaring rim and ribbed shoulder; jars decorated with rustication below belly and decorated with incised designs at the shoulders; dish-on-stands with undercut projected and highly drooping rim (have short and thick neck); bowls with carinated and concave sides; etc. (A. Ghosh 1989: p. 49) It is noteworthy that unique Harappan pottery shapes, such as perforated jar, S-shaped jar, tall dish-on-stand (have long and slender neck), goblet, beaker and handled-cup are absent in Bārān style of pottery. (Y.D. Sharma 1982 p. 150) Bārān ware is usually embellished with painted patterns (such as brush-made spirals) and decorated incised designs on the interior side of vessels and jars. The Bārān painted motifs includes horns crowned by an arrowhead, opposite triangles, semicircles, leafs in vertical or horizontal pattern, wavy lines with lozenges, cross-hatched, squares or rectangles with hatching, fish motif, *pipal* leaf, etc. (A. Ghosh 1989: p. 49)

**Sequence:** The Bārān phase of Mahorānā and other sites in Ghaghara valley, including sites in Bhatinda district is much earlier than the phases exposed at Bārā and Sanghol. Y.D. Sharma has suggested four phases in Bārā culture. (Y.D. Sharma 1987: p. 175) But, keeping in view the reconsiderations of the variations of material culture of Bārāns, appropriately three phases would be necessary.

**Stage-I:** The early farming (Pre-Harappan) community in Ghaghara and Sarasvatī basin have generic similarities with Hākrā Ware culture (R. Mughal 1982: p. 90) and Kalibangan-I. With chronological differences some features of Hākrā pottery viz. buff ware, mud appliqué ware, incised ware; black band around neck, *pipal* leaf motif in bi-chrome ware, etc., are occurred on pottery from Kunāl, Bhirrānā, Girāwar, Farmānā and Baror. (Manmohan Kumar et.al. 2012: pp. 161-62; V. Shinde et.al. 2011: pp. 98-99; V. Shinde et.al. 2008: pp. 79; D.K. Chakrabarti & Sukhdev Saini 2009: p. 61; R.S. Bisht, 2009: pp.



142-43; **Y.D. Sharma 1987: p. 173**) In the Chautāng valley, buff ware is absent and the incised pottery & bi-chrome pottery is also scarce. Other material such as lithic tools also indicates a regional variation. Rohri chert was used in the Ghaghara valley along with local chert (non-Rohri), agate/chalcedony for fabricating stone blades, but in the Chautāng valley, only the Rohri chert found to have been used. (**Randell W. Law 2011: p. 151**) This is a regional cultural manifestation and this can be term as continuous effect of Hākrā pottery tradition on these Pre-Harappan cultures. Apart from the pottery there is no similarity between the material culture of the Hākrā/Cholistan region and these Pre-Harappan cultures of Upper Ghaghara basin. It is believed that the Bārān-Siswālian might have emerged in mountainous region of Baluchistan and later on they came in to contact of Hākrā ware. Subsequently, due to the increasing aridity in Cholistan region, they have migrated to region of Sutlej-Yamunā divide, with independent status. (**B.K. Thapar 1982: p. 5**) Probably, the first phase of Bārā culture might have developed in its individuality in the area of Bhatinda-Sangrur districts of Punjab. It has been evidently proved by the presence of basic designs and shapes of Bārān pottery in the first phase at Mahorānā. This phase is characterized by the pottery features viz. lugs, shallow multiple wavy or vertical lines, horizontal row of vertical hooks, loop handles and proliferation of rim. Although, Bārān designs are comparatively limited at Mahorānā and have close parallels with the designs on Hākrā/North Baluchistan pottery. (**Y.D. Sharma 1987: p. 173**) The painted motifs and incised designs noticed at Bārā are absent here. In addition, there are some incised designs at Mahorānā, which are not found at Bārā. (**Y.D. Sharma 1987: pp. 160-61**) Although, Y.D. Sharma opines that it is possible that when the cognate Baluchi village cultures descended into the Indus plains then some of it produced the urban Harappan structure while the remaining other developed into a

complimentary rural community. Bārān may be one of these food-producing rural communities. (Y.D. Sharma 1982: p.162)

It is obviously clear from excavations that unlike Northern Baluchistan and Punjab, where numerous of Pre-Harappan sites came to an end, in the East of the Indus, food producing farmer communities were somehow connected to the Harappan cultural tradition and they existed prior to the emergence of the Mature Harappan. In Ghaghara-Yamunā divide, Mature Harappan phase superimposed the Late-Siswāl settlements. It is evident from the excavation at Siswāl which stratigraphically revealed the transformation of Siswāl-A (Pre-Harappan) into Siswāl-B (Harappan traits in Pre-Harappan) cultural phase. (Suraj Bhan 1976: pp. 23-24) Perhaps the Bārā-Siswālian culture develops from early civilizations of Baluchistan which came to this area along with or before Harappans and developed their settlements simultaneously.

**Stage-II:** The second stage of Bārān culture is concerned with transformation from the Pre-Harappan to Bārān, which appears to have begun in Cholistan-Rajasthan region. Mitāthal also apparently went through the same process with the difference that in the midst of this transformation there was a strong Harappan intrusion. Appearance of Bārān forms is first noticed in the later phase of Mitāthal sub period IIA. (Suraj Bhan 1975: pp. 6-7) The Bārān ware did not evolve in an isolated milieu, for the entire region was subject to Mature Harappan impact. The sudden appearance of ‘full blooded Indus culture’ in Period II looks like a capture of the town by the Mature Harappans at Mahorānā. In addition, Bārān ware with variegated painting and coarse Bārān with incised shoulders were continued in Period II at Mahorānā when town was captured by the mature Harappan. (Y.D. Sharma 1987: p. 175) It is a matter of fact that when Harappans entered in Ghaghara-Yamunā Divide, they did not capture the entire region. They have concentrated only on the capturing of Pre-

Harappan towns like Ropar, Mitāthal, Banāwali, Rākhigarhi, Bhirrānā, etc. They did not interfere the socio-cultural life of the rural people belonged to Early Harappans and Bārā-Siswālians. They operated their trade mechanism through the towns, where Mature Harappan and Bārā-Siswālian lived together. In this way, the Mature Harappan twin settlements, towns of mixed population and small villages/rural areas have brought under the economic system of Mature Harappan. The inhabitants of Sutlej-Yamunā divide have saved their socio-cultural identity in this broader economic system. Ropar, Rohirā (district Sangrur), Banāwali were initially inhabited/occupied by the people using, largely the pottery of Pre-Harappan fashion. But in the succeeding period, both Mature Harappans and the Bārāns co-existed, as we have seen from the occurrence of Bārān sherds from Harappan levels - although limited in number. The Bārān at Banawali settled a little away from Harappan locality, as the regular settlement of the Bārāns was traced in the succeeding phase outside the city wall in Period-III. **(Y.D. Sharma 1982: p. 120)** It shows the sub-elite societal status of Bārā-Siswālian used to enjoy during Harappan period. Subsequently, the Bārāns occupied the Harappan settlement, raising their houses even on the existing city wall as the major part of the material was found in 'pits and kilns' dug into Indus cultural debris on the top of the mound. **(Y.D. Sharma 1982: p. 118)** In the succeeding period the settlement is overtaken by the Harappan with all their rich urban qualities, but the Bārāns also came with them little later. Again, a repetition of what most probably happened at Mitathal. A comparative study of Bārā and Mitāthal-IIB pottery reveals class family linkages between the two assemblages in techniques, typology and decoration. The scarcity of the classical Harappan shapes and occurrence of evolved types is a common feature of the two. The pottery of both the sites represents the composite character resulting from the fusion of the Harappan and the surviving Siswāl/Kalibangan-I ceramic tradition. **(Suraj Bhan 1973: p.**

260) The presence of Bārā ware in some quantity is distinct from Harappan levels at sites (except Kotla-Nihang-Khan-I) in Sutlej-Ghaghara divide. (**Y.D. Sharma 1987: p. 175**) It seems that Bārān interacted with Harappan in this region later on after the establishment of Harappan towns. Both the cultures have affected each other which is quite visible in the shapes of potteries and designs carved on it, and consequently a relative position of settlements developed. (**Y.D. Sharma 1976: p. 10**) The towns of this phase gained the provincial character.

**Stage-III** After the decline of trade and industries of Harappan phase cities came to an end and small Late Harappan towns and villages of mix culture and Bārā-Siswāl villages survived simultaneously. Bārā-Siswālian dominated the urban settlements. With the decline of Mature Harappan in sub period Mitāthal II-B, evidently prove it, as there was a fresh influx of the Bārāns. (**Suraj Bhan 1973: p. 260**) It is also noticeable at Banawali. (**R.S. Bisht 1982: p.121**) The pottery repertory of this phase shows the modification of Harappan shapes & designs and resurgence of full-fledged folk culture (Bārā-Siswālian). Some Mature Harappa shapes and designs were disappeared and pottery traditions show decadence in the fabric, potting and treatment of surface. The Bārā-Siswālian incised designs, linear geometric and painted designs have been become common phenomenon. (**Y.D. Sharma 1982: p.163**) The Bārā-Siswālian has continued to make the beads of agate, carnelian, faience, paste and terracotta and bangles of faience. The steatite, shell and ivory material are rare or sometime completely absent except few examples from Mirzāpur, Daulatpur and Jognākherā. (**U.V. Singh 2012: p. 98; M. Acharya & R.S. Dahiya: p. 11**) The carnelian beads are small unlike Harappan size and not characterized as barrel-shaped. But faience was the prominent material for crafts industry in this later phase, which was used to make profusely in making

beads, bangles, balls, etc. The surplus food production, specialization in crafts and trade with neighbouring regions have been demarcated by the variety of objects and ornaments made of copper, semi-precious stones etc. (**Suraj Bhan 1976: p. 28; K.N. Dikshit 1984: p. 265** ) The growth of population has been indicated by the increase of Bārā-Siswālian settlements. In the Sutlej-Yamuna divide, the people belonged to Bārā-Siswālian culture have also adopted the different mode of cremation of the death of their family members. At Bhagwānpura IB, two skeletons were found without funeral goods, lying in North-South position in habitational area unlike Harappan's method of cremation. (**J.P. Joshi 1993: p. 156**) It has been observed that there might have a customary practice of these burials related with Bārā-Siswālians, who were the people, belonged to different culture and followed their cultural values independently other than changing their mind for adopting the superior culture i.e. pressure of Mature Harappans. In the third stage, Bārān culture is evident from Bālu, Jognākherā, Daulatpur, Mirzāpur, Bhagwānpura and sites in the Ambala region in the Sarasvatī and Driśdvatī rivers valley. In fact, at Bhagwānpura, a preceding phase contains only Late Bārān ware without the association of the Painted Grey Ware. So Bārān came late in these areas in their movement pattern. At the end of this stage, they have merged with Painted Grey Ware people. (**Y.D. Sharma 1982: p. 163**)

Except Sutlej-Yamunā divide Bārān influence also recognised in the Upper Yamunā-Gangā doab. This region is having typological similarity with the Harappan and as well as Bārān pottery, as is evidenced in the pottery assemblage from Alamgirpur, Bargaon and Hulās in Western Utter Pradesh. (**K.N. Dikshit 1982: p. 347**) The region of upper reaches of Sarasvatī and Sutlej valley was the only out-let for the Bārāns to interact/exchange some kind

of cultural traits with the people of Occur Coloured Pottery living in upper Gangā-Yamunā doab.

**Chronology:** As the dating of Bārā-Siswālian culture is concern, we have no exclusive C-14 dates of Bārā-Siswālian culture from the entire region. We have to depend mostly on the categorisation of different phases of Bārā-Siswālian culture on the basis of available C-14 dates and similarities & dissimilarities in material culture of whole cultural sequence from different sites of Sutlej-Yamunā divide.

At Mahorānā C-14 date from Period IA (Early Harappan and Bārā-Siswālian mix phase) is between 2300-2100 B.C. (Compared with Kalibangan-I: 2400 B.C.), where Bārā-Siswālian pottery have found sporadically. But in the Period IB, pure Bārān pottery has been found with C-14 dating between 2100-1900 B.C. (**Y.D. Sharma 1987: p. 159**) The end of Period-I may be placed at 1900 B.C. This will go well with the Bārā and Sanghol dates, where the more advanced and sophisticated phase of Bārā culture has been dated to c. 2000 to 1500 B.C. At the site of Bārā in the earlier phase (Early Harappan/Bārān) date is nearly about 2000 B.C. (**A. Ghosh 1989: p. 52**) It is believed that the Bārāns and Early Harappans have come into contact with each other firstly at the site of Mahorānā and then at site of Bārā and Sanghol. (**Y.D. Sharma 1987: p. 173**) Then, we have dates from Ropar IA, lying between 2100-1400 B.C. and Kotlā-Nihang-Khān Period-I between 2200-1700 B.C. (Harappan pottery from this phase is much in quantity). (**Y.D. Sharma 1976: p. 14; A. Ghosh 1989: p. 48**) The next C-14 date assigned to phase of pure Bārān material from Hulās is 2000-1000 B.C. (**K.N. Dikshit 1982: p.346-47**) The next stage of Bārā-Siswālian culture is mixed with Painted Grey Ware culture at Bhagwānpura, where C-14 date of period IA is marked between 1700-1300 B.C. (**J.P. Joshi 1993: p. 25**)



From the above examples of C-14 dates from various sites, we can formulate a hypothesis for the study of Bārā culture. Bārāns established themselves with Early Harappans at the site of Mahorānā, and subsequently Bārān established themselves with Mature Harappans at the sites of Kotlā-Nihang-Khān (except first phase) and Ropar in Sutlej-Ghaghara divide. Subsequently, they have mixed with Harappans in Ghaghara-Yamunā divide at Bālu (Period-C: 2000-1700 B.C.), Mitāthal (Period-IIB: 1500-1450 B.C.) and Banāwāli (Period-III relatively fallen between 1700-1300 B.C. and designated as Banāwāli-Bārā cultural phase). (**Suraj Bhan 1973: p. 259; A. Ghosh 1989: p. 48**) At last, they set themselves with Painted Grey Ware people at Bhagwānpura period IA (1700-1300 B.C.). The other sites, where pure Bārān pottery occurred, include Sanghol (1900-1600 B.C.), Daulatpur (1700-1300 B.C.), Mirzāpur (1700-1500 B.C.) (**U.V. Singh 2012: p. 97**) and Jognākherā (1500-1000 B.C.). (**M. Acharya & R.S. Dahiya p. 7**) It seems that when urban Mature Harappan were in decline Bārā-Siswālian set themselves in the Sutlej-Yamunā divide finally near about 1700 B.C. Perhaps this date is also important for the Bārā site where Barans dominated the site by this time. Perhaps Bārā-Siswālian survived in Sutlej-Yamunā divide till 1200 B.C. (Bhagwānpura) and in Yamunā-Gangā divide they survived till 1000 B.C. (Hulās) where few painted and incised pots of Bārā-Siswālian designs are present but in a restricted number. (**K.N. Dikshit 1982: p. 349**) It is therefore, we may assume that the Bārā-Siswālian had not a considerable influence on Yamunā-Gangā divide and at last they merged with local Occur Coloured Pottery culture.

Consequently, we may say that the pure Bārā-Siswālian sites never had been came into notice for Yamuna-Gangā doab but it might have indicated that the inter-regional contacts between Sutlej-Yamunā divide and Yamunā-Gangā divide. From these C-14 dates, we may also guess that the development of

Bārā-Siswālian in Haryana was later than Punjab. It is therefore, perhaps Bārā-Siswālian was the real residents of Sutlej valley and later they influenced the other regional cultures of Sarasvatī-Driśdvatī valley and Yamunā-Gangā doab. Bārā-Siswālian culture is called local culture by different-different archaeologists. But when we examine its characteristics, we must say that it was a culture during Harappan age and without its support & base the Harappans could not achieve those attributes for which they are well known to world history. Bārān ware, therefore, be very late in relation to the Mature Harappan culture. Although the Bārā ware lasted even after the decline and disappearance of the Mature Harappan culture, it would be wrong to describe it as Late Harappan, particularly when it has been found to occur even together with the Pre Harappan.

**Expansion of Bārā Culture:** When we examine the starting of Bārā-Siswālian culture, it appears that this culture was a part of rural early Baluchi cultures. It seems that when these cultures were proceeding towards Indus and Punjab plains, some of Baluchi cultures had been developed in Harappan urban society and partly in the contemporary rural culture as Bārā-Siswālian culture. Bārāns has allowed Harappan to proceed towards Sutlej valley, but Harappans have established themselves first in the Ghaghara-Yamunā divide. In the later phase, Bārāns have dominated the Divide. On the other hand, it also poses a problem regarding the determination of individual status of Bārā culture in the region and beyond. Sutlej-Yamunā divide was a meeting place of different cultures during Proto-historic time. Cultural traits of Bārā, Sothi, Siswāl, Kālibangan-I, Ochre Coloured pottery and Cemetery 'H' cultural complexes are evidenced in this area. Although in some areas single Bārā culture dominates, but all these cultures mingled with each other in the Divide. The Bārān settlements have generally been grouped as under: -

(i) Bārā culture in Sutlej-Ghaghara Divide: - At Mahorānā Bārān folks and Early Harappans lived together. There were adequate Early Harappan (fabrics A, C, E & F of Kalibangan-I) evidences from the first phase to the end. Bārān ware dominant in Period-IB, whereas, pottery belonged to Early Harappans in Period-IA. (Y.D. Sharma 1987: p.172) At Bārā also, the elements inter-mingled with each other in Early Harappan period with the domination of Early Harappan, but in later phases the Bārāns were in domination. (Y.D. Sharma 1982: p. 142, 150) At Ropar, the Bārān material belonged to Period-IA (Early Harappan). Here in Period-IB, from lowest levels the Bārān pottery found with Mature Harappan pottery and structure. (Y.D. Sharma 1982: p. 157) At Kotlā-Nihang-Khān Bārān pottery were occurred with Mature Harappan pottery from the lowest levels in some parts of the site. Hence at Kotlā-Nihang-Khān the percentage of Bārān Pottery is higher than Mature Harappan Pottery. (Y.D. Sharma 1982: p. 141)

In this Divide Bārā settlements emerged before earliest phase of Mature Harappan. Mature Harappans and Bārān both lived simultaneously at Chandigarh and also at Ropar and Kotlā-Nihang-Khān in middle phases of settlement. Here one thing is notable at Chandigarh that the classical Mature Harappan shapes were also absent. (Y.D. Sharma 1982: p. 162) It indicates, Perhaps the pure Harappan elite class might have not been mixed with rural Bārāns and probably, Bārāns characterized with homogeneity. While considering all the above fact, it is notable that Bārān came in to contact with Harappan later on after their establishment in this area.

(ii) Bārā culture in Sarasvatī-Driśdvatī valley: - In the Sarasvatī-Driśdvatī valley Kalibangan-I wares was in dominance. In the later phase, late Siswāl and Bārān traits have assimilated as we observe in some shape in the pottery assemblage and incised marks. These shapes and designs are occurred at

various sites in Jind, Ambala and Kurukshetra districts of Haryana. From Rākhigarhi Bārā-Siswālian elements (incised lines and typical Bārān *Lotā*) found in Period-I with some Early Harappan elements. (**Amrender Nath 2001: p. 44**) The Bārā-Siswālian shapes and decorated designs have also been found with Mature Harappan at Banāwali during the Period III, there was Bārā-Siswālian pottery mostly limited in eastern quarter. (**R.S. Bisht 1982: p. 120**) At Mitāthal-IIB pottery shows the resurgence of the Siswālian elements (few examples are alike Bārān). It shows a composite character of two varied cultures. (**Suraj Bhan 1973: p. 260**) At Bālu Late Harappan and Bārā-Siswālian material was found in the upper levels. (**Y.D. Sharma 1982: p. 161**) Same is the case with Bhirrana too. (**L.S. Rao 2004: p. 21, 22**) In the later phases of Harappan culture its density along the Sarasvatī and Driśdvatī is not been so dense as compared to Punjab.

Finally, it is observed in the Sarasvatī-Driśdvatī valley that there is existence of modified Harappan pottery mixed with Bārā-Siswālian pottery belonged to Mature Harappan period. The common shapes of this period are *Lotā*-shaped vase, globular vase with flanged rim, bowl with tapering convex or carinated sides, basin with flaring rim, trough with shallow grooves on the interior and rusticated Jars, which have been derived from the prototype Bārā-Siswālian pottery.

(iii) Bārā culture in Gangā-Yamunā Doab: - Bārā-Siswālian folk people, who have been dominated the Divide in Early, Mature & Late phases of the Harappan culture. It is significant that the ceramic traditions of Mitāthal-I, which has been continued simultaneously and the painting were mainly confined to horizontal black bands, a common feature of the Siswālian, Bārān and Ochre Coloured Pottery. The area of Mitāthal sector was occupied by the Late Harappan (Mitāthal-IIB) in the second millennium BC, this area had



yielded the typical copper hoard tools such as harpoons, Celts and rings. (**Suraj Bhan 1975: p. 17**) These tools generally associated with Ochre Coloured Pottery. Even the Ochre Coloured Pottery reported from Gangā-Yamunā doab has a lot of similarity with the Late Harappan pottery of Mitāthal-IIB and Bārā/Siswālian cultures in a stratigraphic context. (**Suraj Bhan 1973: p. 261**) The occurrence of the Copper Hoards and typological similarities of Ochre Coloured Pottery with Bārā/Siswālian and Late Harappan pottery of Ghaghara basin indicates that the Ochre Coloured Pottery of Gangā-Yamunā doab has its antecedents in the Late Harappan pottery of the Ghaghara basin and later it transformed as an independent culture.

**Relationship of Bārā Culture with other cultures:** In this article we have tried to solve the problem of the intermingling of various Bārā cultural traits with different Harappan/non-Harappan culture in Sutlej-Yamunā divide and found a mixture of different people, belonged to varied culture in this area. This has formed a unique region formed with varied cultural traits which led to the emergence of regional entities of the Harappan civilization. As we already stated that Kālībangan-I traits dominated at Sarasvatī, Sothi/Siswālian at Driśdvatī and Bārā traits is primarily in Sutlej region with some of common regional characters.

(i) Relation with Harappan: - Sometime, it is very difficult to differentiate the Bārā-Siswālian and Early Harappan ware and this similarity might not have been a result of interaction but sharing of a common ancestry. The pottery particularly the Red Ware with black bands on the rim and neck, mud applique with rustication below belly portion (Fabric B of Kālībangan), grey ware (Fabric F of Kālībangan) and the incise decorations are the continuity of Pre Harappan ceramic tradition. In the painted bi-chrome motifs pipal leaf, with black outline and filled with white pigmented are common in both the cultures.



It is evidently cleared that the Pre-Harappan people settled in the region, as pastoralists and then locally developed the Bārā-Siswālian ware. In the beginning of Bārā-Siswālian with Pre-Harappans have settled in towns of Sutlej-Yamunā divide. They have established their separate settlements, where inferior Bārā-Siswālian elements have been found. The Harappan, when intruded this area, has been marked by three categories - the villages mainly inhabited by the Bārā-Siswālians folks; the towns where Bārā-Siswālians came into closer contact with Harappans, both lived together in the same region, at the same sites and sometime in the same houses. Subsequently the population is segregated and Bārā-Siswālian folks used to live outside the main territory of urban inhabitants as is evidenced at Banāwali, Mitāthal, Ropar and Rohirā located in Ghaghara-Yamunā divide. **(Suraj Bhan 1973: p. 260)** The material culture was also very different from each other, found among these three categories. In rural areas, they maintain their separate identity. It has been observed that the Harappans have not attained maturity within this area, but matured in other area and then arrived in this area. This categorization shows that Harappans established their cities amidst Bārā-Siswālian zone of habitation. When Mature Harappan had decline, they had rehabilitated in their respective towns.

(ii) Decline of Harappan culture and Bārā culture: - In the absence of large settlements, the network of towns and villages of the Harappans ceased. The Late Harappan culture appears to be the outcome of the normal process of cultural transformation and the internal interactions of the society due to decline of the economy. This phase is characterized by an amalgam of Harappan, Bārān, Cemetery-H, Ochre Coloured Pottery and Painted Grey Ware ceramic complexes in the Sutlej-Yamunā divide. In the later phase of Harappan civilization Harappan towns have collapsed and the population migrated to



rural/village settlements, where local cultures (Bārān/Siswālian/Sothi/Ochre Coloured Pottery/Cemetery-H) were dominated and many new Late Harappan settlements emerged in surrounding of these village settlements. There is a dramatic expansion of these settlements in the Divide and it goes beyond to this region. The popularity of Bārā-Siswālian designs proves it. The decline of Mature Harappan culture in the Divide provides an opportunity to resurgence of Early Harappan local cultures. In the Ghaghara-Yamunā basin the Late Harappan pottery has two different horizons, one is Mitāthal-IIB and another is Bārān). On the distribution map the core area of the Bārā culture lay in Punjab and northern Haryana (Ambala, Kurukshetra, Kaithal, northern Jind and Hissar, Ftehabad districts), whereas domination of Mitāthal-IIB confined to the southern area of Ghaghara basin (southern Jind &Hissar, Sonipat, Rohtak, Bhiwani, Jhajjar districts). The Bārān pottery traditions are comparable with Mitāthal-IIB pottery in respect of shapes, types, surface treatment, paintings etc. The sub-period of Mitāthal II-B, Ropar, Sanghol and other sites is characterized by a progressive degeneration in their architecture and material culture.

These changes clearly indicate that the vast spread of rural Early Harappan society and civilization did not suddenly disappear, but to a considerable extent it has survived for many centuries in other regions and were contemporary with the later stage. This has been demonstrated at Mitāthal-IIB, Bhagwānpura-I, Jognākherā-I, Mirzāpur-I and Daulatpur-I in Ghaghara-Yamunā divide and Dadheri, Chandigarh and Sanghol in Sutlej-Ghaghara divide. (C. Margabandhu 1987: p. 3-7) Excavations at the site of Bhagwānpura have thrown a new light on the relationship and co-existence between Late Harappans/Bārā and Painted Grey Ware using people. (J.P. Joshi 1993: p. 17) Similar evidences has been has been reported from Dadheri, Nagar, and Katpalon. (K.N. Dikshit 1967: p. 566) Location analysis of Late

Harappan sites indicates the shifting of the sites in north-east direction i.e. in the Sarasvatī valley. The economy of this period was based on the agriculture with little trade.

It has been observed that the influence of Harappan was stronger and easily discernible in the later period. The Bārā-Siswālian has developed, when the Late Harappan became weaker. It was a transitory period for settlements at both Sutlej-Ghaghara and Sarasvatī-Yamunā divides. And this mixture is quite visible in some ceramic forms & designs and in the findings of stone weights, faience objects, terracotta cakes and animal figurines. This also indicates the spread and expansion of common systems and ideas in the Divides. This mixture of Bārā-Siswālian has saved their regional identity.

(iii) Ochre Coloured Pottery and Bārā culture: - Association of the Ochre Coloured Pottery/Copper hoards with a pure form of Copper metallurgical tradition found at Mitāthal, has indicated a resurgence of Pre-Harappan culture, might have influenced by the Harappans. **(Suraj Bhan 1973: p. 261)** It appears that the Bārā/Siswālian tradition of Sutlej-Yamunā Divide and Ochre Coloured Pottery/Copper hoards of Western Uttar Pradesh region have been contemporary with the Harappans and might have survived for a long even after the downfall of Harappan culture in these areas. The Ochre Coloured Pottery of the Gangā-Yamunā Doab and Pre Harappan deposits of Indus and local cultures belongs to Sutlej-Yamunā doab are closely associated and belong to the same stock. **(K.N. Dikshit 1982: p. 349)** It seems that a sizeable population of the Pre-Harappans moved towards the east as far as the Central doab, established their settlements and continued to have an independent life. But those who were left behind could not escape from the Harappan impact as could be seen at Kālibangan-I, Sothian, Bārān and Siswāl-B tradition of this area. **(R.C. Agrawal & Vijay Kumar 1982: p. 130)**

(iv) Cemetery-H and Bārā culture: - The Cemetery-H culture is the least known of the protohistoric cultures in terms of its extent, distribution and about the people, as it is recognised only from few sites. The similarities of the Cemetery-H ware in shapes and designs with that of pottery from Dher Mājra, Bārā, etc., in the upper Sutlej valley have been relatively established. Suraj Bhan opined that a comparative study of the Cemetery-H and Mitāthal-IIB ware suggests quite a few common types and painted designs between the two. The cylindrical storage pits in Mitāthal-IIB levels also resemble their counterparts in the Cemetery-H culture. Its influence has also been noticed in the ceramics of Sanghol, Daulatpur and Chandigarh. (**Suraj Bhan 1973: p. 260**) K.N. Dikshit drew parallel to certain shapes and designs of the Bara ware in the Cemetery-H and the Jhukar wares. (**K.N. Dikshit 1982: p. 348**) Thus, the Cemetery-H elements seem to be fairly distributed and are associated with the Bārā culture in the Divide.

(v) Sothi Culture and Bārā Culture: - The simple motifs like horizontal, wavy, oblique, zigzag cross hatched designs, etc. on Mitathal-IIB pottery seem to be the degenerated form of Sothi-Siswālian and Kalibangan-I ware. In the later phase of this period some Bārān type pottery elements are also found, which indicates that both the cultures flourished contemporarily for some time in Ghaghara-Yamunā divide. (**Y.D. Sharma 1976: P. 14**) Most of Early Harappan villages transformed into Late Harappan without adopting classical Harappan elements were contemporary to the Mature Harappan sites. The similar scenario witnessed in the Harappan graves at Farmana, where the classical Harappan pottery such as long stem dish-on-stand, button base vases, goblets and beakers and pottery of Sothi-Siswal tradition such as vases with black band around rim and shoulders, bowls with feature less rims etc, are found together in same burial pits as a part of grave goods. Sometime the Sothi-

Siswal pottery outnumbers the classical Harappan pottery and much evolved, as pots are comparatively bigger in size and are sturdier. On some contemporary Sothi-Siswal pottery sherds the classical Harappan painted motifs viz. fish-scale motifs are also found and so also the regular striations marks, which are usually not found on the Sothi-Siswal pottery. (**Vasant Shinde 2008: p. 78, 91**)

(vi) Painted Grey Ware and Bārā culture: - The Bhagwanpura excavation indicates that there is smooth transition from Period IA (Late Harappan/Bārān with Painted Grey Ware) to Period IB (Painted Grey Ware). The pottery complex in Period IA is comparable to those traits which were found at Bārā and Siswāl-B. (**Y.D. Sharma 1982: p. 163**) However, it has been noted that the Bārāns gradually diminished; but they did not vanish till the end. The superiority of the Painted Grey Ware people has been observed and it can further elaborated with the excavation results of Madina (single culture Painted Grey Ware site), here about 5% of the total pottery belongs to Late Harappan pottery having close affinities with Bārān ware. Here not even a single sherd is typologically similar to Mitāthal-IIB ware. (**Manmohan Kumar 2009: p. 95**)

**Industrial art & crafts of Barans:** The earlier phase of Bārā-Siswālian culture indicates the existence of specialized classes, which have been indulged in different art & crafts viz. smithy, lapidary, masonry, pot-making and probably also wood works and leather based artistic works, based on surplus production. The upper hill areas of Himalayas used to provide timbers to lower areas through these Bārā-Siswālian ruler settlements. The trade used to transact among corn, metal, precious stones, cattle etc. The Early Harappan towns inhabited in this period played a role of politico-economic power. These sites existed almost in the centre of Bārān-Siswālian villages. They have played a meaningful role in the trading trend of this period. In the next phase Bārā-Siswālian survive simultaneously the Mature Harappans. Some sites like Kharar

Alipur, Kheri Meham, Kendaia-3, Shamlo Kalan-2, Mitathal has yield a lot of faience objects such as beads and bangles. Mitāthal and Kendal-3 has yielded some crucible stricken with molten faience, which indicates that these sites were industrial sites. **(Y.D. Sharma 1982: p. 163; Manmohan Kumar 2012: p. 174)** At Mitāthal, on the surface, there is a row of furnaces in the western side of the lower town and a lot of faience slag is scattered here which indicates that during the Harappan/Late Harappan period, there was faience making industry. **(Y.D. Sharma 1982: p. 163; Manmohan Kumar 2009: p. 18-19)** Excavations at Kotlā-Nihang-Khān, Mahorānā, Girāwar, Mitāthal and Jognākhera are the examples of metallurgical kilns which throw light on the chronological position of industrial activities. **(Y.D. Sharma 1982: p. 163; Manmohan Kumar 2012: p. 161)**

**Analysis and Interpretation:** All the Bārān sites are small-village settlements of agro-pastoral character, occupying area below 5 hectares. So, Bārā culture has distinct qualities, seems originate from different Pre-Harappan cultures. Bārāns preceded the Harappans in the Sutlej divide, but Harappans trailed not a behind, and once they had caught up with the former, both lived together for a considerable time, influencing each another, sharing a common life, yet maintaining their independent identities. So, they were different-different cultures keeping their identity separate with each other. At this early stage the Harappans had no uniformity or homogeneity in the regional patterns.

In the process of assimilation, the Pre-Harappans abandoned the numerous of cultural traits, the use of sun-dried bricks to construct their house, the absence of street drainage, making use of pure form of copper, female figurines, graffiti marks, the relative dearth of antiquities & ornaments and modification of Mature Harappans have given rise to the regional identity of the Harappan civilization in the Sutlej-Yamunā Doab. At Bārā, Siswāl and



Mitāthal, the culture has been followed the Harappans and subsequently kept on continued. However, it has also been argued that the specific differences in the settlement patterns of the structures, the ceramic industries, size of bricks and blades of the two assemblages preclude the possibility of any genetic relationship between the Kalibangan-I/Bārān, Late Siswālian and the Harappan culture. Yet, it seems that Harappans established their cities amidst Late Siswālian and Bārān zone of habitation. They used to live together in the same region, at the same sites and perhaps in the same houses, particularly in towns. The cities and towns have revealed that the elements of the elitist culture intermingled with the masses of local rural settlements. The monumental architecture, well laid-out town plan, script, weights & measures and the classical Harappan pottery reflect the class character. The domestic pottery of Pre-Harappan tradition and animistic beliefs represent the culture of the masses. It appears that the society was divided into classes comprising administration, priests, merchants, peasants, artisans, workers and perhaps also slaves. **(Suraj Bhan 1986: pp. 9-10)** In the post-urban (Late Harappan) phase, there have been numerous changes taken place from time to time. The most important change has been affected by the city life, which has disappeared for several centuries and gradually a pattern of more or less uniform peasant agricultural settlements developed in the Sutlej-Yamunā divide.

With the decline of this civilization, the sophisticated Harappan traits were watered down by mingling with impoverished local cultures, i.e. Siswālian culture in Ghaghara-Yamunā divide and Bārān culture in Sutlej-Ghaghara divide. It is therefore, the regional variations conforming to evolutionary tendencies particularly in the peripheral region, comprised of Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh. The mature Harappans did not interfere with the life of the Bārāns living in the villages. The villages were, however, brought under



the economic system. The agricultural produce of the villages was acquired by the Harappans and put into the Harappan trade mechanism.

Bārāns seem to score over at earlier phase in the Sutlej valley. From their earlier home on the Sutlej, they may have spread to the Sarasvatī and later on in the Ganga-Yamunā doab. Between the two, in Sarasvatī-Driśdvatī valley there is a different phenomenon. Here, at Mitathal the Harappans appeared first and then the Bārāns. The Bārāns may have spread to the Sarasvatī from their earlier home on the Sutlej, whereas at Bhagwanpura-Daulatpur complex Bārāns appeared in Late/Post Harappan context. This movement would have been taken place sometime around 1700 B.C. By this, time the Ochre Coloured Pottery people and the Harappans most probably came with contact to each other on the interstate border of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The Ochre Coloured Pottery of Yamunā-Gangā doab and Bārā-Siswālian pottery traditions have some similarities which prove that these cultures had been attributed with same ancestor or they have in good contacts. Socially and culturally, however, they were an independent community. They have given a base to Harappans to develop their culture, which came later in this area. So that a well developed mixed culture flourished in this area. Hexagonal settlement pattern, indicate a true yard stick of boosting the Harappan economy. Small towns used to provide a linkage or bridge between rural society of raw-material suppliers and urban society of various specialists. Some important cities/towns, such as Banawali, Ropar, Kotlā-Nihang-Khān, etc., were located on strategic position, used to play a crucial role for trading network of this area. The Bārā-Siswālian achieves their livelihood through varied economic activities.

The emerging population of Late Harappan phase has also been major cause behind this change. But when the Harappan urban structure had fallen, for whatever reasons, the Bārāns appear to have occupied with their normal life.

Perhaps the Bārāns lacked the natural talent and capacity for organization. With the fall of the Harappans the organized urban life came to an end. Being primarily producers of food and self-sustaining, the Bārāns, however, continued to exist for a considerable time. But fragmentation had now overtaken the community. Consequently, people travelled with their ceramic traditions to the upper Ganga basin along the Ghaghara (Sarasvatī) and the Sutlej and mixed with the people, using the Ochre Coloured Pottery as well as Painted Grey Ware.

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