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MOHENJODARO OF SINDHIS: THE EARLIER ARCHAEOLOGICAL LITERATURE IN THE SINDHI LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Scholars have been involved in debates on the archaeology of Mohenjodaro from the time of its first discovery in the 1920s. Sindhi writers also matter in the broader context as they have greatly published on this protohistoric site. When for the first time these writings started to appear? An attempt can be made to trace some of the earliest works in Sindhi on the archaeology of Mohenjodaro. And it may take us back to 1929. Subsequently, a number of texts appeared which make the object of analysis in this study. This paper also attempts to bring the authors of these works to the fore. They were historians, scholars, or general literati. Their representations of Mohenjodaro, in the context of civilization of South Asia, in the early decades of its discovery have also been pondered upon. Finally, some reflections are made with questions of producing and circulating archaeological knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

The ancient city of Mohenjodaro, which is located in District Larkana in the Sindh province of Pakistan, is well-known across the world. It is one of the five major urban centers of the Indus Civilization, which is a bronze age civilization of Indo-Pakistani subcontinent. Mohenjodaro was first discovered by R.D. Banerji, an Indian archaeologist of the Archaeological Survey of British India, in 1922, and, later on, the site was excavated in several

campaigns between 1922 and 1964 led by Marshall, Mackay, Wheeler, and Dales respectively (Dales, 1964; Dales and Kenoyer, 1996; Excavation at Mohenjodaro 1964, 1968; Mackay, 1998, 2001; Marshall, 2012; Wheeler, 1997). The discovery of this site was so important that it changed the overall understanding of ancient past of India (and Pakistan). It pushed back the civilizational history of this part of the world to the third millennium BCE (Lahiri, 2015). Mohenjodaro's archaeological importance, as well as its popularity, is due to the contribution it made to the civilizational history of India and the world, and the role it played in the discovery of the Indus Civilization and in creating the ancient identity of the Indo-Pakistan. In this regard, the contribution of Marshall, who wrote a series of articles in the *Illustrated London News* in the mid-1920s popularizing his discoveries at Mohenjodaro, cannot be ignored (Lahiri, 2015). On the other hand, another reason of popularity of Mohenjodaro at local level is the local media and indigenous scholars and intellectuals who made it famous through their publications. Mohenjodaro has been given special space in the Sindhi press since the early days of its discovery. This is clear from the pre-1947 publications on the archaeology of Mohenjodaro in the Sindhi language as discussed in this work.

Since the early twentieth century, Marshall's director-generalship of the Archaeological Survey of India, abundant literature, including books, articles, poetry, and fiction, has been published on various aspects of the archaeology and the ancient cultures of India and Pakistan in regional languages. This local archaeological literature has been a focus of research of archaeologists from India and Pakistan in the recent years. They have studied archaeological publications available in the Indo-Pakistani languages from the perspective of knowledge production and consumption and also in the framework of popularization. In her recent article, Shaheen(2022) has studied two books written on the two ancient cities of Pakistan namely Harappa and Taxila in the Punjabi language by Dr. Saifur Rahman Dar from the perspective of vernacularization of archaeology. She also mentions about the "works in various Indian languages about South Asian archaeology, particularly ones by H. D. Sankalia" discussed by K. Paddayya (Paddayya, 2018). Another similar research by Gohar (2017) focuses on post-1947 Sindhi literature on Mohenjodaro. Through archaeological publications, as well as bilingual Urdu-English and Sindhi-English archaeology/cultural heritage signboards, in the Pakistani languages, Gohar (2023) has also identified local terminology used for archaeology in Pakistan. Whereas, Katpar(2022), in his Master's thesis, discusses the Sindhi literature on numismatics by analyzing the contents and contexts of local scholars and their works. Overall, these researches offer invaluable information about the different aspects of production and circulation of archaeological knowledge in local languages and its consumption in Pakistan and significant to this study.

However, the scholars working on the literature on archaeology and heritage in the Pakistani languages have not specifically focused on the archaeological representation and/or portrayal. There is an urgent need to explore how archaeological things (e.g., archaeologists and their discipline and ancient cultural material) have been portrayed and represented in the local contexts of

Pakistan. This article highlights the representations of Mohenjodaro in pre-1947 Sindhi literature. Moser (2009) writes “that archaeological representations can be two- or three-dimensional, visual or textual, static or performative and they can either depict past cultures, archaeological sites, or the material remains of ancient societies”. Moser’s study is significant to this research as it provides framework to classify, define, and evaluate Mohenjodaro’s representations in Sindhi.

This article focuses on the pre-1947 publications on Mohenjodaro in the Sindhi language. The aim of this research is to bring out all the Sindhi publications on Mohenjodaro that appeared before the creation of Pakistan and to highlight how Mohenjodaro is represented in pre-1947 Sindhi literature. The organization of this article consists of an introduction, methodology, Mohenjodaro in the Sindhi print media before 1947—in which the data is presented under different subheadings, and the conclusion. In this article, the authors have highlighted that Mohenjodaro is portrayed as an ideal city in earlier Sindhi literature, and the representation of Mohenjodaro is both visual and textual.

METHODOLOGY

This research aims to examine local representations of Mohenjodaro before the partition in 1947 through archaeological literature in the Sindhi language. For the collection of Sindhi publications on the ancient city of Mohenjodaro, the fieldwork was conducted at the Research Library of the Institute of Sindhology, University of Sindh in Jamshoro. Because, the Institute of Sindhology’s library contains a huge collection of Sindhi publications which include books, journals, magazines, and newspapers. The data was collected in February 2019. The whole pre-1947 Sindhi collection of books and all the newspapers and magazines appearing between 1922 and 1947 were carefully perused to gather publication on Mohenjodaro. Particularly, the Sindhi newspapers and magazines of almost twenty-five years, from 1922 to 1947, available at the library were checked thoroughly. As a result, total five writings on Mohenjodaro were collected from different books, newspapers, and magazines, including two book chapters/parts, two newspaper and magazine articles, and one poem. Apart from these, two news releases were also found. They have been reviewed and critically analyzed so as to highlight the Sindhi perception/imagery of Mohenjodaro and its representations in the pre-1947 Sindhi society.

Mohenjodaro in the Sindhi Print Media before 1947

The historian and scholar of Sindh have been involved in the process of production and transmission of archaeological knowledge into Sindhi since the early decades of the previous century. According to Gohar (2023, p. 12), the tradition of producing and transmitting archaeological knowledge in Sindh started with the discovery of Mohenjodaro. Therefore, the earlier archaeological publications in Sindhi are about the archaeology of Mohenjodaro. A bibliographic account of these publications, specifically those which appeared before 1947, is given below. And with this, these publications

have been also classified and discussed under three categories: (1) press releases, (2) magazine writings, and (3) book chapters/parts.

Bibliographic Details

1. 'Exhibition of archaeological material of Mohenjodaro' [in Sindhi]. (1936). The Islah Karachi, 4 December, p.2.
2. Jamiatrai, M. (1929). 'The state of Sindh five thousand years ago' [in Sindhi], The Sind School Magazine, (September), pp.7-10.
3. Lutfullah, M. (1939). 'Mohenjodaro'[poem, in Sindhi], Sindhu, (October), pp.7-10.
4. Sharma, D.P.R. (1944). Indus Civilisation in perspective [in Sindhi]. Hyderabad.
5. 'The News of Sindh' [Sindhi]. (1922). The Daily Al-Wahid Karachi, 27 December, p.4.
6. Vasvani (1931). Johar-i Nasr [in Sindhi]. Hyderabad, Sindh.
7. Vadhvani, M.H.R. (1932). Mohenjodaro [in Sindhi], Sindhu, (February), pp.8-22.

Press Releases

Two news releases make part of the pre-1947 Sindhi publications on Mohenjodaro. They are about the government's initiatives at Mohenjodaro. One was published in The Daily Al-Wahid Karachi on 27 Decmeber 1922 and the other appeared in a weekly The Islah Karachi on 4 December 1936. The translation of The Daily Al-Wahid Karachi news release is as follow: "During the exploration of ancient deserted sites the government has commenced excavation work at a mound which is known as Mohen Ji Mari in Dokri Taluka. Two hundred labourers of Brohi caste are working, the government find wealth or not but should find out what is the reality of this famous mound". It is obvious from this press statement that it was meant to publicize the excavation of Mohenjodaro at local level. It contains very important information, for instance, it mentions that the mound is locally called "Mohen Ji Mari" which means "the mansion of Mohen".

On the other hand, the title of the second press release, which was published in the "Sindh News" section in The Islah Karachi, is "Exhibition of Archaeological Material of Mohenjodaro". It informs about the art/crafts exhibition in Calcutta (Kolkata) where objects found in Mohenjodaro were also put on exhibit. It goes on: "An exhibition of art and crafts will be organized in Calcutta. It is being said that things [artifacts] discovered from Mohenjodaro would also be displayed." Overall, it shows the cultural and historical importance of Mohenjodaro being created among the people the sense of ancient past of the country.

Magazine Writings

There are two types of magazine writings on Mohenjodaro in pre-1947 archaeological publications in the Sindhi language which include articles and poetry. Total three writings, one poem and two articles have been collected and they were published in different periodicals. The earliest of these writings is an article written by Jamiatrai, who was an Assistant Master at Phul School in Larkana. It was published in The Sind School Magazine in September 1929. In the starting paragraphs of the article, the author also refers to a work that was published in the May 1926 issue of The Sind School Magazine (which could not be located), and it might be earliest writing on Mohenjodaro by the Sindhi writers. The author portrays a picture of how the life of the people in Sindh in ancient times was with the help of available information about Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization. In this article, the author writes that Sindh was a wealthy country in ancient times, and Mohenjodaro is shown as a very city with unique architecture the dwelling/building of which were much beautiful and well-constructed than the early period houses of Mesopotamia. Furthermore, the poem and an article were published in a monthly magazine Sindhu, which was published by Bulchand V. Rajpal from Shikarpur. The poem was published in October 1939. It was written by a very famous Sindhi poet and scholar Lutfullah Shikarpuri, who wrote under different pen names and, in this poem, his name is written as Master Lutfullah (Jogi) Shikarpuri. It is a very long poem containing 45 couplets. A picture of the “Stupa Mound” at Mohenjodaro is also added in the publication. The author sings the grandeur of Mohenjodaro, and presents Mohenjodaro as a peaceful and highly developed city. Apart from this poem, an article also portrays the similar picture of Mohenjodaro. This article was published in the February 1932 issue of the Sindhu magazine. It was written by Master HotchandRochiramVadhvani. It is a detailed articles on Mohenjodaro and it also contains photographs of the artifacts of Mohenjodaro. Through content analysis, it reflects that the major part of the text is written with the help of Sir John Marshall’s publications.

Book Chapters/Parts

Apart from press releases and periodical, writings on the archaeological importance of Mohenjodaro have been also found in the books which were published in Sindhi before 1947. Two books which contains chapters/parts on Mohenjodaro are available. Of these, one is text-book and the other about the ancient history of Sindh. The text-book titled “Johar-i Nasr” was published by Melharam MangatramVasvani in 1931. This book was written for the students of matric class to make them familiar with diverse topics, and also to help them in understanding the writing styles of different types and form and to enhance students’ writing skills in their mother tongue. It has ‘the choicest selections’ of Sindhi prose, containing forty essays. The essay number 28 in the book is about Mohenjodaro. It is a very detailed essay, and it also shows photographs of the pottery discovered at the site. The different aspects of ancient past of Mohenjodaro, such as site’s discovery, antiquity, architecture etc., have been discussed in the essay, beginning with the discovery of the site. Particular, the essay is organized into following parts: (1) relationship between Harappa and Mohenjodaro, (2) Discoveries of the Nal city, (3) great

historical discovery, (4) ancient history, (5) ancient civilization of India, (6) great city, (7) sewerage system, (8) the great palace, (9) worship in temple, (10) cremation of dead, (11) art and craft, and (12) riddles. This essay is written with the help of excavation reports and publications on Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization. It highlights the importance of the site in understanding the ancient civilization of Indo-Pakistani subcontinent. In this essay, Mohenjodaro is portrayed as the great city with unique architecture and lay-out. In the last sentence, the author writes: “every resident of Sindh should be very proud of this [Mohenjodaro].”

Moreover, a long chapter dedicated to Mohenjodaro is also included in a book titled “Parachin Sindhu Sabhita Jo Nazaro”. It was written by Dwarkaprasad Rochiram Sharma, who was a Hyderabad based Sindhi writer and historian. It is sixty-page-long chapter discussing in detail different aspects of Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization. In this writing, Mohenjodaro is depicted as a very big city, but author also mentions at one point that Mohenjodaro is smaller than Harappa.

CONCLUSION

Mohenjodaro, together with Harappa, is the most popular of all the ancient sites in Pakistan. It has become an integral part of the public definition and perception about the ancient past of the country. This research traces the history of transmission of archaeological knowledge about Mohenjodaro in the Sindhi, and highlights that different factors have been involved in its popularity since its discovery and one of them was the role played by the local media and indigenous scholars in the popularization of Mohenjodaro at public level. Overall, it can be said that the frequent media representations and interest of local scholars in the archaeology of Mohenjodaro, beside archaeological work, since time of its discovery in the early twentieth century have made the site famous.

The analysis of the archaeological publications on Mohenjodaro shows that earliest mention of Mohenjodaro in Sindhi is found in the press release of 1922 when the first excavation campaign at the site was launched by the Archaeological Survey of India under the supervision of R.D. Banerji. After that, several writings appeared in periodical and books in the form of news release, articles, and book parts/chapters. This research brings out six such publications which include which 2 press releases, two magazine articles, and two book parts/chapter. The articles and book parts or chapters were written by school teachers/educationists, except for one book chapter which was written by historian. Furthermore, in the pre-1947 Sindhi publications, Mohenjodaro is represented in both textual and visual forms. It was portrayed as a highly developed ancient city by Sindhi writers, and the image of “Stupa Mound” has been used by writers/publishers to visually portray the site. This visual representation of Mohenjodaro is still very common.

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