

A Late Harappan Port at Kindar Kheda on the Saurashtra Coast

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Abstract

During onshore exploration along the Saurashtra coast a Protohistoric site at Kindar Kheda was visited and a large number of artefacts were observed within agricultural lands. The potsherds noted here point to this representing a late Harappan settlement. The discovery of a stone anchor from the site, and the study of an ancient map suggests that this site might have served as an active port in past. This port was approachable by boat through creeks from Porbandar and Kindari (Visawada) till A.D. 1856; however, due to geomorphological changes, the creeks are today at distance from Kindar Kheda.

Introduction

The Saurashtra coast has been the focal point of maritime activities since Harappan times; of which several Harappan sites were excavated. Important sites are Lothal, Padri, Prabhas Patan, Nageswar and Bet Dwarka. A few sites of the historic period are noted at Hathab and Dwarka. Ancient ports are generally located along the banks of backwater creeks which serve as safe harbours during natural disasters such as cyclones. Underwater investigations along the Saurashtra coast brought to light a large number of stone anchors and remains of ancient jetties at Dwarka (Gaur *et al.* 2004a), Bet Dwarka (Sundaresh *et al.* 2002) and Somnath (Gaur *et al.* 2002).

In the course of onshore excavations at Bokhira near Porbandar, explorations were conducted around Porbandar in order to locate ancient ports in the vicinity. This resulted in the discovery of a late Harappan site near Kindar Kheda. Geographically, the site is located adjacent to a low-lying area, which runs upto the Porbandar and Kindari creeks. A study of an old map obtained from the state archive at Porbandar, and which dates to A.D. 1856 suggests that this area was flooded during high tide. This paper presents results of these explorations and indicates the possibility of the existence of an ancient port at Kindar Kheda during the Harappan period.

The village of Kindar Kheda is situated about 20 km northwest of Porbandar (Fig. 1). The archaeological site is under cultivation, and is located on the eastern side of village. A sun (Surya) temple dating back to the 9th century A.D. of the post-Maitraka period is situated here (Sampura 1968) (Fig. 2). The southern part of the site is a low-lying area.

Results

The exploration of the site brought to light a large number of artefacts of the late Harappan period. An exposed section near the temple indicates that the archaeological deposit is more than 1.5 m thick.

Stone anchor

This is on an irregular somewhat circular limestone block (Fig. 3). The anchor lies to the west of the temple near a well, and was recovered in 2002, while the field was being ploughed. The stone has been pierced in the centre and the hole is circular in shape, smooth and wider on one side suggesting extensive use as a stone anchor. The shape and size of the stone suggests that this would have served as an anchor. However, it is difficult to date it, as it was not found in stratigraphic context.

Stone artefacts

Five stone tools, one blade, 2 points and 2 fluted cores (Fig. 4) were recovered, all of which are on quartz. A hexagonal carnelian bead and cross hole were also recovered. Similar artefacts have been reported from several Protohistoric and Historic sites. A circular limestone rubber stone was also recovered. This has one smooth side, with the opposite side being rough and porous.

Pottery

Numerous Harappan potsherds were recovered from the site and from the section (Figs. 5-6; Table 1). Important shapes are bowls, jars, and dishes. The pottery has well-leveled clay and is well fired.

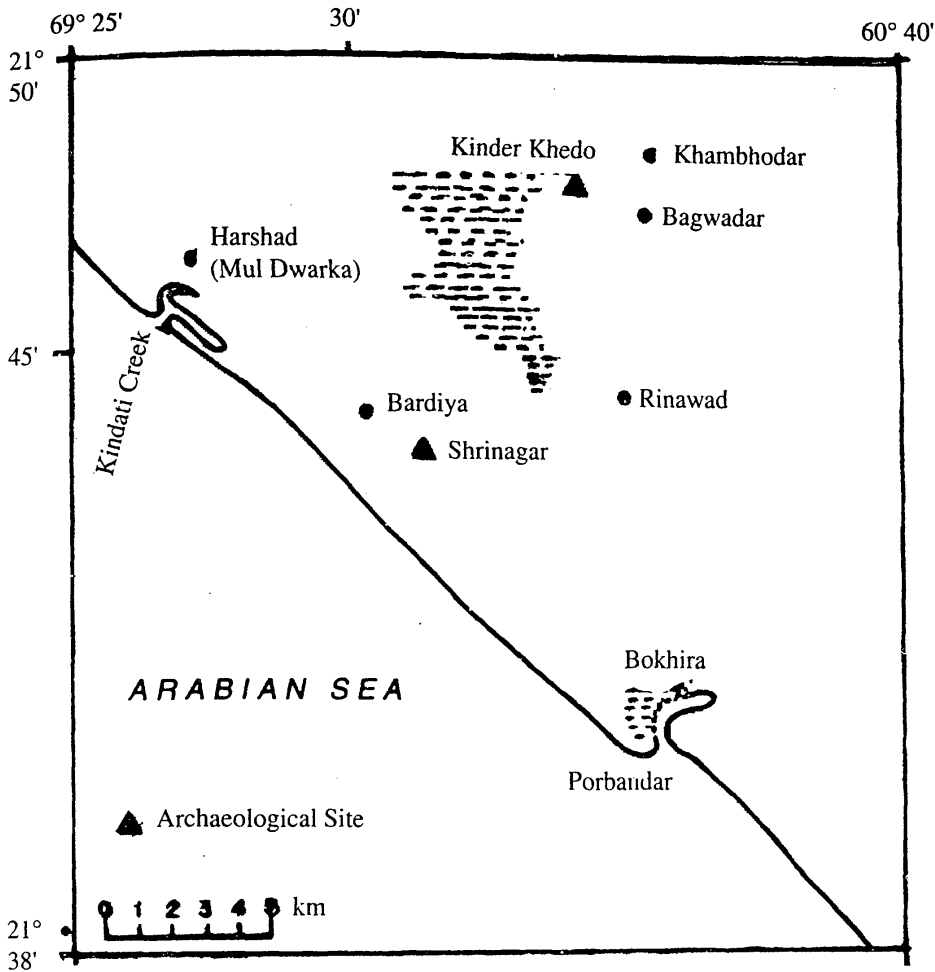


Fig. 1: Kinder Kheda: location of the archaeological site



Fig. 2: Kinder Kheda: a ninth century temple

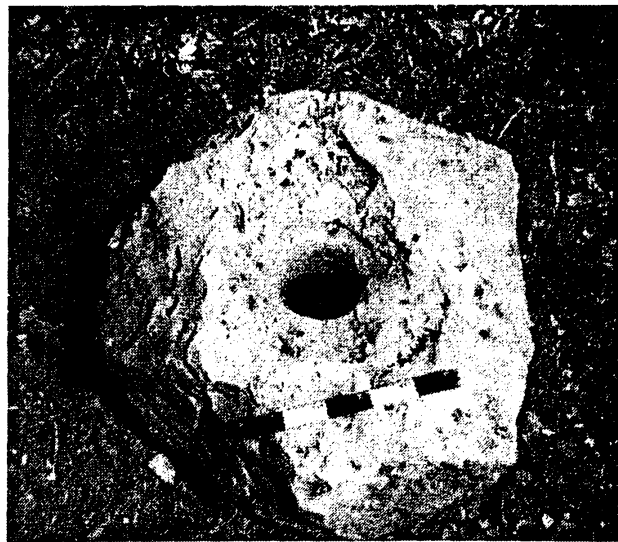


Fig. 3: Kinder Kheda: stone anchor found near the archaeological site



Fig. 4: Kinder Kheda: stone tools

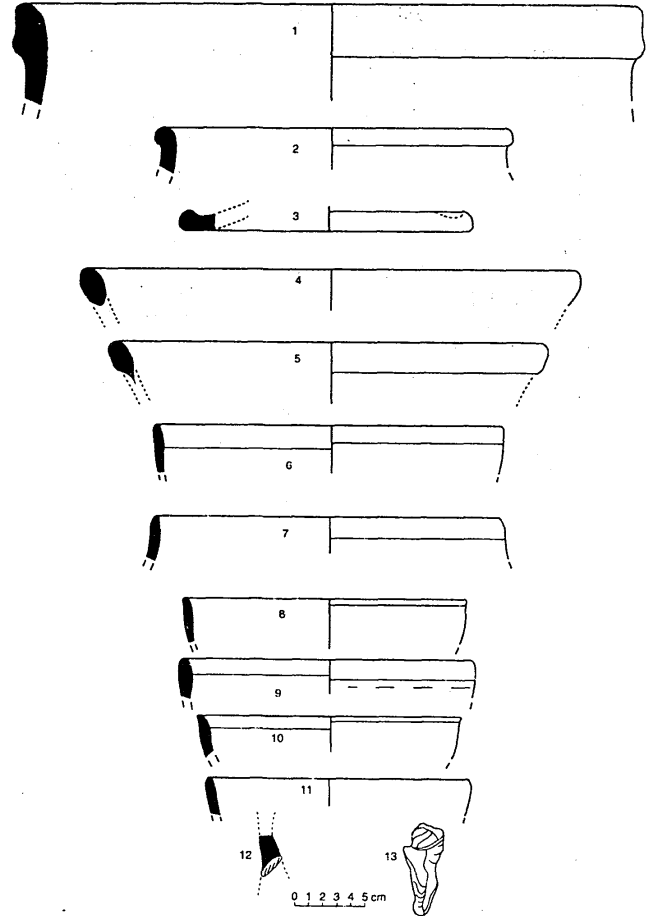


Fig. 6: Late Harappan artefacts (pottery and collumella) from Kinder Kheda



Fig. 5: Late Harappan pottery from Kinder Kheda

Shell artefacts

Shell artefacts (collumela, apex and fragments of bangles) are made on *Turbinella pyrum* (conch shell) which is available abundantly on the Saurashtra coast (Fig. 7).

Study of an old map

A map of Gujarat dating to A.D. 1856, was located at the State Archive at Porbandar (Fig. 8). This was studied and the topographical features depicted here were compared with that of a map of 1969 A.D. (Fig. 1). The major changes in topography are the regression and advancement



Fig. 7: Kinder Kheda: shell objects

Table 1: A brief description of a few illustrated potsherds

Fig. 6 Item No.	Shape and size	Rim	Description
1	Medium sized jar	beaded rim, slightly externally projected	Internally treated with a thick red slip band on the rim portion. Made of well-levigated clay, fine fabric and well fired
2	Medium sized jar	flat and slightly externally projected rim	Fine fabric and well fired
3	Jar	oval shaped splayed out rim	Externally treated with red wash. Rough surface coarse fabric and ill-fired
4	Large sized jar	thickened and collared rim	Treated with red wash. Coarse fabric and ill-fired
5	Jar	beaded rim	Made of well-levigated clay. Fine fabric and well fired
6	Bowl	featureless sharpened rim	Straight sides with an external and internal treatment. Rough surface, medium fabric and well fired
7	Bowl	featureless sharpened rim and convex sided	Externally treated with chocolate slip and internally with red slip. Fine fabric and well fired
8	Bowl	featureless rim	Internally treated with dark brown slip. Straight sides. Fine fabric and well fired
9	Bowl	featureless sharpened rim	It has been treated with chocolate slip on both sides. It is made of well-levigated clay. Fine fabric and well fired
10	Bowl	sharpened rim	It has straight sides and not treated with any slip or wash. Coarse fabric and ill-fired
11	Stud handle bowl		It is treated with red slip. It is made of well-levigated clay. Fine fabric and well fired

of the Porbandar and Kindari creeks upto Kindar Kheda. In the map (1856 A.D.), the location of Kindar Kheda is depicted along the bank of a creek approachable by boat from Porbandar and Kindari Creeks. Today, however, owing to changing geomorphology, both these approaches do not exist. A shallow depression south of Kindar Kheda is noticeable, which is flooded during the monsoons.

Discussion

Archaeological explorations around Porbandar have been rewarded by discoveries at Kindar Kheda. Ceramics and stone artefacts suggest that this was a Late Harappan site dating back to the 2nd millennium B.C. The pottery types compare well with those reported from other protohistoric sites at Bet Dwarka (Gaur and Sundaresh 2003), Nageswar (Hegde *et al.* 1990), Porbandar (Gaur *et al.* 2004b), and Rojadi (Possel and Raval 1989). The discovery of a stone anchor and shell artefacts, suggests maritime activities as is the case with other Harappan sites along the Saurashtra coast. The study of an ancient map indicates that topogra-

phy has changed significantly between Kindar Kheda and Porbandar and Kindari Creek. It is possible that Kindar Kheda was approachable by boat at least up to A.D. 1856. The study of sea level fluctuations suggests that during Harappan times, the sea level was higher than at present (Merh 1992). Archaeological, geographical and geological data suggest that Kindar Kheda might have been an active Protohistoric and Historical port on the Saurashtra coast.

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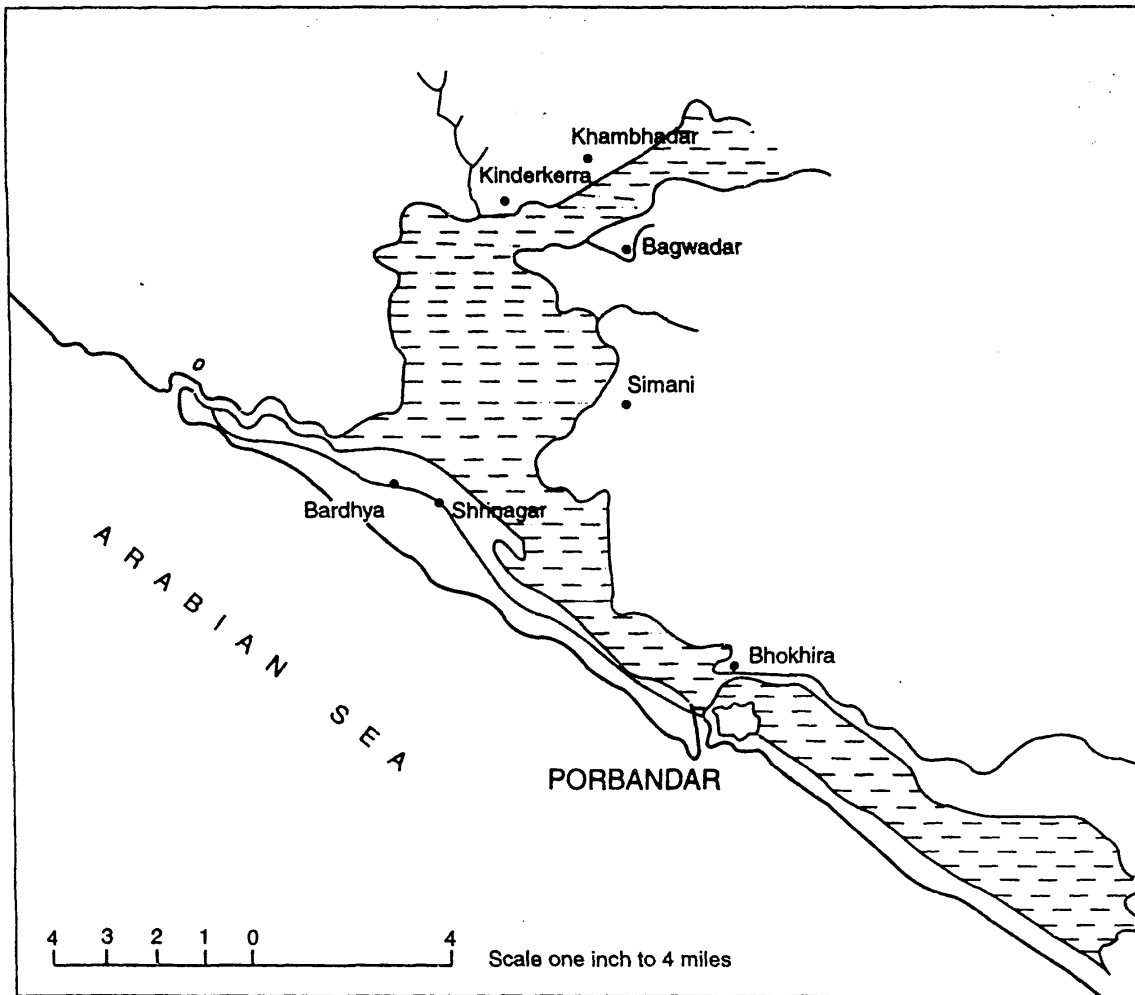


Fig. 8: A map of A.D. 1856 showing the location of Kinder Kheda on the Creek

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