

## CERAMIC INDUSTRIES OF HARYANA IN THE GUPTA PERIOD: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

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**Abstract:** This paper deal with the development of ceramic industries of Haryana in the Gupta period on the basis of exploration and excavations reports. The art of pottery making, a major innovation evolved by man in the establishment settled of life. In the historical process of evolution, a change in the way of living customary, new norms and trends are introduced which have a direct bearing in the creative art of ceramic and these are reflected affecting the cultural and social life of the people. In the Gupta golden age every development was on the pick. Potteries encountered in the Gupta period were generally wheel- turned, and they had generally wash on the exterior and had slip in rare cases, sherds without wash or slip were also encountered. These potteries were of medium to coarse micaceous gritty fabrics.

### Development of ceramic through the ages

The art of pottery-making a prime innovation evolved by man in the course of forming a settled way of lifestyles. In the historical process of evolution, a change in the way of living customary, new norms and trends are introduced which have a right away bearing in the creative art of ceramic and these are reflected affecting the cultural and social life of the people. Pottery constitutes the largest number in terms of finds from excavations at sites and uniformly they furnish abundant data for understanding the socio-cultural set-up and also in a way the period of time or the relative chronology in a connected sequence. Consequently the significance of pottery and a comprehensive understanding of its use and purpose necessitate the study of the technique of preparation and its historical background. In order to know the historical aspect, its technical knowledge becomes essential.

The evolutions of the shapes of pottery have their roots in the local traits of the way of life and these are aspects of the social nature that changes the functional utility of the pottery. Surface decoration on vessels comprises a major source of historical information of the cultural manifestations on the ways of life of the people and also reflects their artistic creativeness. Various type forms, decoration and shape are basis to classify and interpret the social and religious trends current in society and diffusion to adjacent places.

Present tribal society are depend on hunter and gathering and don't make their own pottery but also used pottery which exchange from other advance societies of the nearby region, on the basis of this ethno-archaeological indication, it may possible that the Mesolithic people use the pottery exchange from contemporary advanced society.

Pottery in the last phase of the Mesolithic traditions, which is also associated with quern, ring-stone, stone-muller and wild rice, is just a commencement in the ceramic industry instead the ceramic industry in the Neolithic period is much advanced, standardized and matured. The early independent invention of pottery combined with the evidence of plant food and some other cultural relics, e.g. mullers, ring-stones, querns and hutments,

<sup>1</sup> Pal, J.N. (1986). *Archaeology of Southern Uttar Pradesh, Ceramic industries of Northern Vindhya, Swabha Parkshan*, Allahabad. P. 147.

suggests that the late Mesolithic phase was a period of transition from Mesolithic to Neolithic culture.

The pottery tradition of the Neolithic culture was occurred cord impressed ware, found in the advance Mesolithic context may be the result of the cultural contact of two cultures. But as revealed by the typo-technological study of the pottery. The primary attempt of making the pottery, most of the morphological shapes, decorative motifs and specially the size of the pots, not common in the Neolithic ceramic assemblage indicate that the Mesolithic people made their own pottery without any influence from any advanced existing culture.

After this, the early farming community has been identified as the pre-Harappan with so called 'Hakra Culture'. Ceramic of related culture from Kunal, Bhirrana, Girawad, and Farmana yielded the same type of pottery. The next phase in the history of the related region is identifying by the advent of the Mature Harappan culture. In this phase, manufacturing technique of ceramic and town planning were so much better rather than early phase. Black on red ware pottery was made on fast wheel so compose very sophisticated of this phase. And the next phase of this civilization distinguished by late Harappan culture which known its degradation. Many of the classic Harappan pottery form disappear of use at that time. The most common pottery types remained was dish on stand with short stand, dish on stand with ribbed intersection, jar with narrow and wide mouth, vases with undercut rim, and globular vases with flanged rim with fine red slip.

Sign of nature and life were painted in this phase by Harappan potters, who have wide knowledge of various geometrical and line compositions. In this period, the technique of perfect firing in oxidization condition was discovered. Incised design became more popular in decoration category, during the post Harappan period. A complicated technique of firing called 'double firing technique' was also invented by post Harappan pottery technologist. The fabric gain special attention from the craftsman in P. G. W. period. Excavation at the Bhagwanpura, represent the relationship between the Late Harappan and PGW culture.

Pre-NBP culture(associated with plain or painted black and red, black slipped and red wares) of the middle Ganga valley and Megalithic culture of the Deccan and south India make the starting point of early historical culture of India, according to Indian archaeological evidence. After this, Kushana empire has flourished in the region of Haryana. The term of 'Kushana period', is generally used in archaeological culture sequence expression. The deposits dating between the starting of the Christian era to the 3<sup>rd</sup> AD are clubbed in this phase. It is identified from historical accounts that the dynasty after which this period derives its name, ruled the Indian sub-subcontinent from the third quarter of the first century AD to the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of second century AD. Not only Northern part of India had a stable political system, but it also came under the sway of new thoughts and technologies, which enriched the culture of this period remarkably. Potteries encountered in the Gupta period were generally wheel- turned, and they had generally wash on the exterior and had slip in rare cases, sherds without wash or slip were also encountered. These potteries were of medium to coarse micaceous gritty fabrics.

### **Ceramics in Guptas Period**

The Guptas period comprised significance in ancient Indian history as well as in the history of Haryana. This period considers as a golden age in the glorious past of India. The

time period between 3<sup>rd</sup> century and 6<sup>th</sup> A. D. century<sup>2</sup> generally recognized as the era of Gupta's dynasty. Shree Gupta known as the founder of Guptas dynasty

The present study deals with the ceramic industries of Haryana in Gupta period on the basis of a few scientifically excavated sites, viz., Sugh, Agroha, Adi Badri, Harsha ka Tila, Raja Karan ka Qila, Khokhrakot, Naurangabad etc. After the disappearance of the Northern Black Polished Ware, the ceramic art in Haryana began to decline. This was possibly because of the gradual introduction of the metal wares which were decidedly much more durable than earthen counterparts and required less labour. Besides, monetary expenditure incurred on the production of the N.B.P.W. like brilliant deluxe potteries was no less than that spent on the production of the metal ware. Naturally, ordinary ceramic industries which required less labour money survived and the brilliant one of deluxe quality, which required enough money and technical ability, gradually disappeared for ever. Not only this, the brilliant technical knowledge of producing N.B.P. like potteries of very high quality too died with the art itself. Now the people of means, who used N.B.P.W. like deluxe potteries, resorted to the use metal wares, only the common people, who could not afford metal wares, continued to use earthen utensils for their domestic purposes.<sup>3</sup>

### Design and Shapes

Though there is no particular type which can decidedly be called the representative pottery of the Gupta period still we have sufficient ceramic evidences which give a clear picture of the contemporary ceramic industries. The Guptas period pottery could be divided into two wares, one of the Red Ware and second was the Red Polished Ware. At the sites such as Khokhrakot, Agroha, Harsh ka Tila with related to this period and Red Ware found in huge quantity but sherds of grey ware are no exception and typologically they are same as are in the red ware.

The sprinkler type of pottery could have been the representative of the Gupta period if it would not have been found from the Kushana level also.<sup>4</sup> More than a dozen types with a few sub-types, mostly in red ware and scarcely in grey ware, were picked up from the Gupta level at these sites. The main types were represented by jars, vases, plates, dishes, basins, bowls, cups or tumblers, inkpots, lids, lipped vessels, spouted pots, miniature bowls, cups or tumblers, inkpots, lids, lipped vessels, spouted pots, miniature pots, sprinklers, stands, finials. Jars had, generally, wide mouths and externally thickened rims.<sup>5</sup> The sub- types of vases were distinguished respectively by flared, beaked, collared, clubbed and externally reverted rims. Besides, handis with incurved rims, narrow-necked vessels, vessels with grooved shoulders and lipped vessels were also met with in this group. Different shapes of plates were characterised by corrugated splayed out rims and carinated shoulders of the dishes, some were with incurved rims and some with doubly carinated profiles, while others had splayed out rims and saggar bases. Shallow dishes with flared rims, were also met with the bowls, some were conical bowls, a few were with vertical rims, some had incurved rims and corrugated sides, while others had cylindrical profiles and tapering sides respectively. A few lid-cum-bowls may also be added to this group of pottery. Cups or tumblers were also of various sub- types, represented by featureless rims, flared rims, footed bases,<sup>6</sup> etc. The shapes of basins were distinguished by

<sup>2</sup> Srivastava, S.K., (1971). *Chhavi Golden Jubilee Volume*, p. 374.

<sup>3</sup> Agrawala, V.S., (1974). *Gupta Art*, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p.4.

<sup>5</sup> Srivastava, S.K., *Chhavi: Golden Jubilee Volume*, p. 375.

<sup>6</sup> Agrawala, V.S., *op. cit.* p. 98.

clubbed and splayed out rims respectively, such type of pottery unearthed from the Gupta level at Sugh.

Such types of pottery had long and very narrow necks and round profiles. Lids with incurved and flared waists, a ceremonial lid with a lamp on the top at the centre were unearthed from the Gupta level at Harsh ka Tila. An inkpot- like lid with prominently flanged waist and a thick sagger base having soot stains round the neck was unearthed from the same level at Harsh ka Tila.<sup>7</sup> Miniature pots were also not lacking, these were represented by spouted pot, simple miniature pot and carinated handis. The spouted variety of miniature pot had a flanged out grooved rim and a grooved shoulder, the latter having a long prominent spout of long section. A few specimens of the decorated sherds were also met with in the same level. Decorations were represented by impressed flower design, horizontal straight and wavy grooving, impressed mat design, incised slanting strokes, impressed small rosettes and solar designs etc.<sup>8</sup>

### Discussion

Though the Gupta period potteries were not of high technical deluxe qualities, still they were very utilitarian in character. In the Gupta golden age every development was on the pick. No doubt, metal wares were sufficiently produced, but the abundant production of earthen wares, though of medium to coarse fabric, suggests that the metal utensils could be afforded only by the rich, and the common people of humble means who were unable to afford metal wares used earthen potteries. This clearly indicates the existence of an impoverished populous section of the society even in the Gupta golden period. The common people possibly used earthen wares for their all domestic purposes. Jars, vases and vessels served the purposes of storing water and grains,<sup>9</sup> and handis and other small vessels were used for cooking purposes. Tumblers or cups stood for modern tumblers for drinking purposes, while bowls were used for keeping curries. The purpose of the basins was to keep cooked food or for preparing dough by mixing water for the purpose of preparing bread, etc. or for keeping other liquid edible materials. Dishes and plates, like their modern counterparts, were used as dinner and breakfast utensils. Lids were used for closing the mouths of big jars or vases permanently for a certain period, and lid- cum- bowls served the purposes of simple bowls and as well as those of such lids as were used simply to cover the mouths of the big jars or vases by being kept above them. Lipped vessels were probably used for ceremonial purposes.<sup>10</sup> Incense burners suggest the religious character of the contemporary society; they were used for burning incense at the time of worshipping any god or goddess. The efficiency and high skill of baking and burning, and not often of colouring also, the deluge of terra cotta seals, plaques and figurines, and bricks and tiles testify also to a very high standard of the potter's art in the period under review.

The main types of the pottery of this period and their variants form a long and large series with minor differences. Generally major potteries such as pots were wheel-made, but mould made pots are also considerable in number, indeed this period may be considered as the most important for the mould-technique. Whatever the type of variety- jars, dishes, lids, bowls, basins, caskets, etc. all pots of the period are characterized by fine finish and

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<sup>7</sup> Indian Archaeological A Review 1990-91, pp-18-19.

<sup>8</sup> Agrawala, V.S., *op. cit.* p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> Srivastava, S.K., *op.cit.* p. 378.

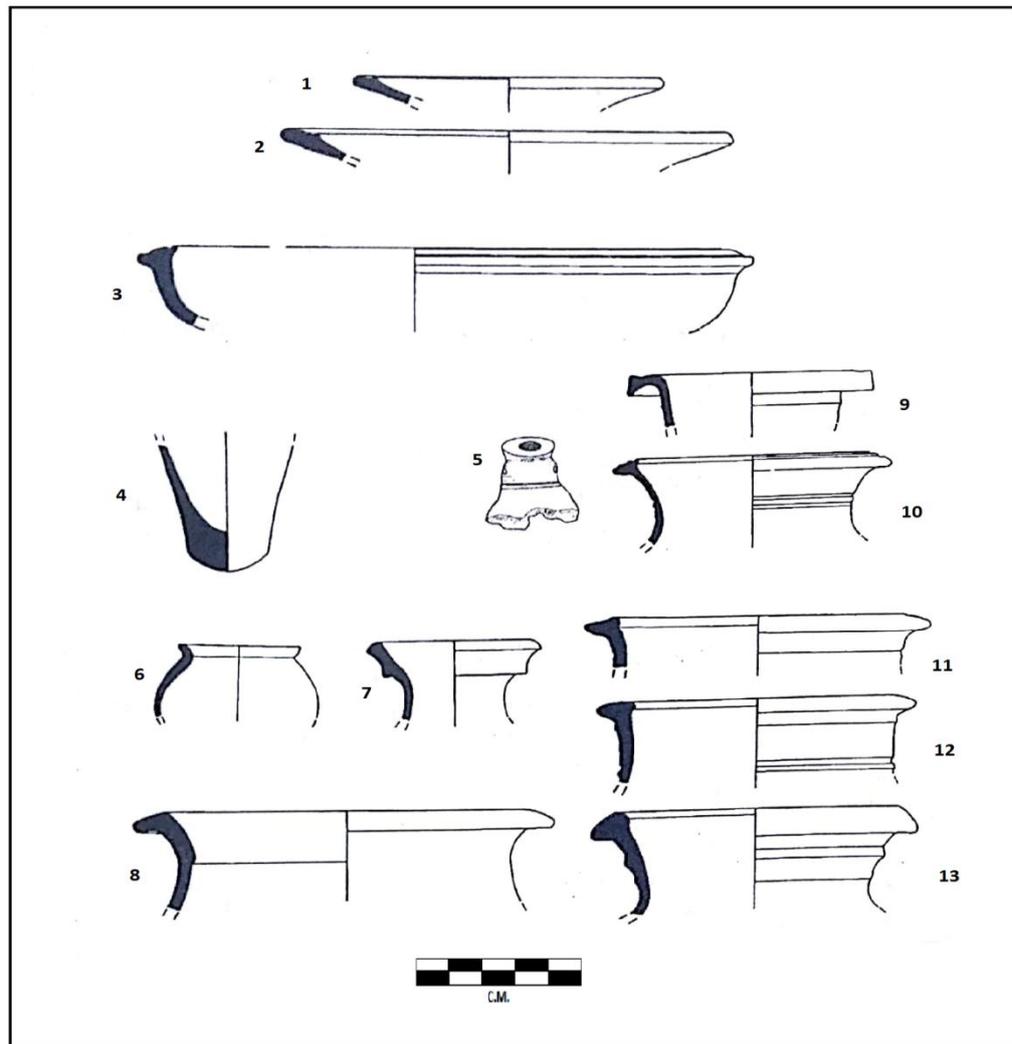
<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 379.

graceful designs- lotuses, small vegetal patterns, rosettes, rectilinear of curvilinear geometrical patterns, ornate nandipada pendants, girds, spirals, zigzag or fan shaped etc. either incised with blunt points or imprinted in relief by moulds or stamps. There are certain painted specimens as well where simple designs of broad or narrow bands are drawn in black on the red ground. The large number of pottery spouts assignable to this period and picked up at Sugh, Aadi Badri, Agroha, Raja Karan ka Qila, Khokhrakot and many other sites is indeed remarkable; they are mostly designed in the form of animal heads such as boar, elephant, lion, etc. there is no doubt that such utilitarian devices as these spouts and lug-handles or lug-ears of cooking and drinking vessels, etc. were evolved from earlier models, with modifications.

### **The Pottery of Guptas period**

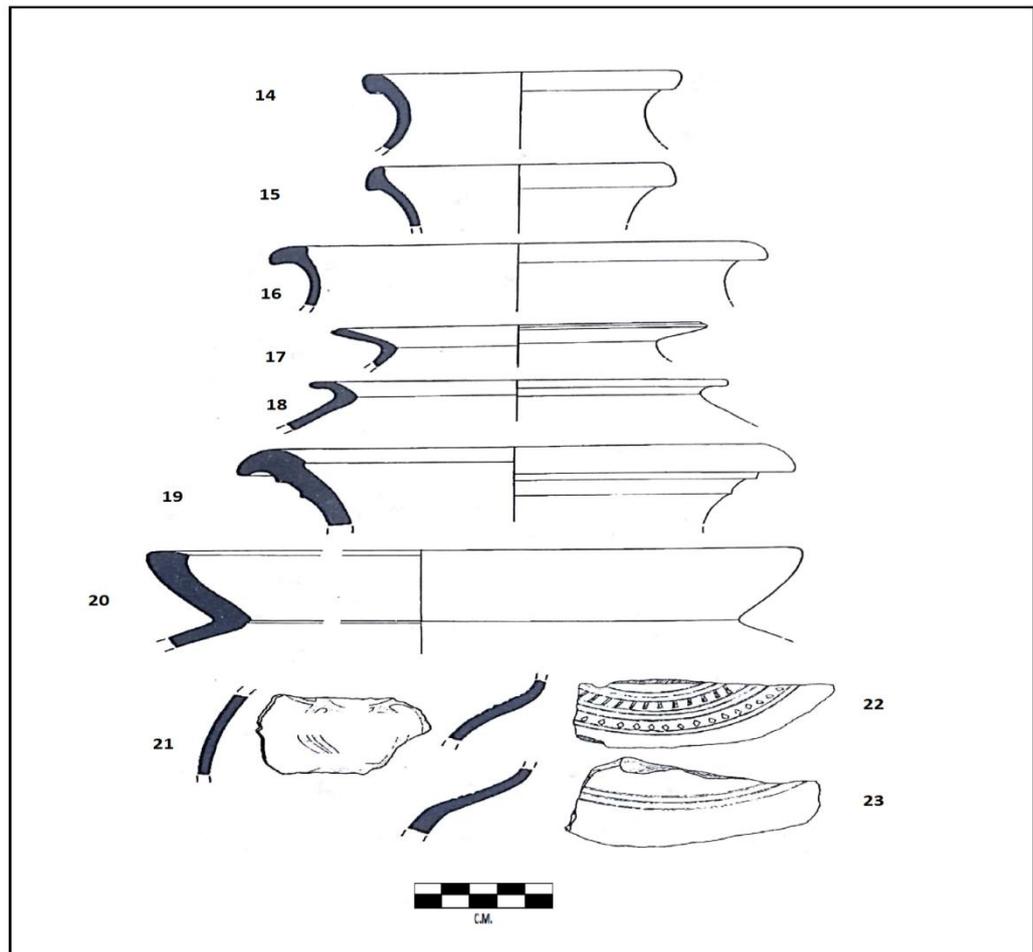
Similar to the earlier period, the collection of pottery from various sites, the shapes found in this category, in general, corresponded with pottery of the Gupta periods.

1. Bowl with outwardly splayed out, convex ended and internally grooved rim. Medium fabric. Pale red core with red slip, weathered.
2. Bowl, similar to above, but larger, it is made of medium fabric. Grayish core with chocolate slip.
3. Basin with clubbed rim, with projection both in the exterior and the interior sides. Convex sides and flattish broad base.
4. Tumbler with conical base. Fine fabric. Pale red core. Unslipped.
5. Moulded spout.
6. Vase with short neck. Outwardly splayed featureless rim. Globular body. Medium fabric. Pale red core. Unslipped.
7. Vase with high necked. Outwardly flaring, convex topped collared rim. Medium fabric. Pale red core with Red slip, weathered.
8. Vase with medium neck. Outwardly splayed and hanging rim. Groove on the neck. Medium fabric. Pale red core with Red slip.
9. Vase with long neck. Outwardly hanging and nail ended rim. Medium fabric with pale red core. Red slip.
10. Vase with high necked with series of grooves. Outwardly flaring clubbed and collared rim. Fine fabric. Pale red core with red slip.
11. Vase, variant of the above. Nail head internally curved rim. Grooving on the neck. Medium fabric. Bright red core and unslipped.
12. Vase with variant of the, with nail headed rim. Neck is marked by grooves and bands. Medium fabric. Ochre coloured core with red slip.
13. Vase with high neck with prominent bands and grooves. Outwardly hanging, nail shaped, incurved rim. Medium fabric. Pale red core with chocolate slip, weathered.



14. Vase with high naked, outwardly hanging convex topped collared rim. Coarse fabric. Pale red core with red slip.
15. Vase with high neck. Clubbed and slightly in tuned collared rim. Medium fabric. Pale red core deep red slip.
16. Vase with medium fabric. Pale red core with chocolate slip.
17. Vase with short necked. Outwardly flaring rim with flat top. Medium fabric. Paled red core with dark red slip
18. Vase with short necked and externally projected, internally thickened rim. Neck is marked by grooves both internally and externally. Medium fabric with dull red core and chocolate slip.
19. Vase with externally beaked rim. Two ridge on the exterior of the tapering high neck. Coarse fabric. Red core with red slip.
20. Vase with externally flaring and incurved, horizontally cut rim. Coarse fabric. Dull red coarse and unslipped.
21. Designed potsherd and design has been embossed.

22. Designed potsherd and body below the beck was decorated with a series of engraved lines and bands of slanted lines and row of diamond shaped motif.
23. Broken part of a large pot with incised series of circles.



**EXCAVATED SITES OF GUPTAS PERIOD IN HARYANA**

S.No.	Site/Geocoordinates	Tehsil/District	Cultural Sequence	Remarks	Reference
1.	Adi Badri (30° 46' N; 77° 26' E)	Yamunanagar	Late Kushana period till 10 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> cen. A.D.	(i) Stupa cum monastery complex (ii) Burnt brick stupa of late Kushana period in Kushana bricks (35 20 6 cm; 33 20 5 cm, 30 22 6 cm and 23 25 6 cm)	IAR, 2002-03, pp.97-104.
2.	Sugh (30° 14' N; 77° 35' E)	Yamunanagar	Pd I – PGW and NBPW Pd II – Early Historic red ware Pd III – Superfluous deposits of medieval period	(i) 15 m. high mound covering about 5 km. in circumference (ii) Sun dried and burnt brick structures and a monastery (iii) Kushana coins, large number of terracotta figurines, beads of semi-precious stones etc.	IAR, 1998-99, p.24; 1965-66, pp.35-36, 1963-64, pp.27-28.
3.	Agroha (29° 23' N; 75° 61' E)	Hissar	Saka-Kushana to early Gupta period	(i) Fortified settlement with baked and unbaked brick structures (ii) Typical Kushana pottery (iii) Copper coins, iron objects, semi precious stones bead, shell bangles (iv) A terracotta sealing of 3 <sup>rd</sup> - 4 <sup>th</sup> cen. A.D. having script Brahmi	IAR, 1978-79, pp.68-69.
4.	Daulatpur (29° 57' N; 76° 55' E)	Kurukshetra	Pd I – Late Harappan Pd II – PGW Pd III – Grey Ware associated with N.B.P.W. Pd IV – early medieval	(i) Red polished ware and stamped red ware from phase 2 of Pd. III (ii) Well planned structures of mud bricks (iii) Clay sealing and a seal	IAR, 1968-69, pp.8-9.
5.	Harsha Ka Tila (Thanesar) (29° 50' N; 76° 49' E)	Kurukshetra	Kushana, Gupta, Post Gupta, Rajput and Mughal periods	(i) Extensive mound of approx. 1 km length, 750 m. width and 15-18 m. height. (ii) Mud fortification of Kushana period. (iii) Mud brick and baked brick structure, drains etc. (iv) Sealing, terracotta tablets, red ware, ivory and shell bangles, copper coins, beads of semi precious stone etc.	IAR, 1990-91, pp.18-19; 1989-90, pp.27-32; 1988-89, pp.21-24; 1987-88, pp.28-31.
6.	Kasithal (30° 03' N; 76° 56' E)	Kurukshetra	Pd I – PGW Pd II – Early Historic red ware Pd III – Medieval period	(i) Red ware of early Christian centuries	B. Dutt, "Settlements of the Painted Grey ware in Haryana", Ph.D. thesis (unpublished), K.U.K., 1980, p.150.
7.	Raja Karna Ka Qila (29° 56' N; 76° 48' E)	Kurukshetra	Pd I – PGW Pd II – Plain Grey Ware & red polished ware associated with N.B. P.W.	(i) Mud brick and baked brick structures (ii) Red ware (iii) Copper coins, beads of semi precious stones,	IAR, 1971-72, p.24; 1970-71, pp.15-16.

			Pd III – Late medieval	shell bangles, hearths etc.	
8.	Khokhrakot (28° 50' N; 76° 35' E)	Rohtak	NBPW, Yaudheya and Kushana Pd III-Gupta Period	(i) Coin and coin moulds of Indo Greeks, Yaudheyas and Kushana rulers. (ii) 4.60 m. thick Kushana deposit from Pd. III (B) (iii) Structures of burnt bricks (iv) Red ware, two danpatras, gold and iron rings, shell, ivory and quartz beads etc.	IAR, 1986-87, pp.34-35.
9.	Naurangabad (28° 48' N; 75° 08' E)	Bhiwani	Pd I – Early Yaudheya Pd II – Kushana Pd III – Late Yaudheya Pd IV- Early Medieval Period	(i) Fortified settlement of about 58 acres with approx. 1.15 m. thick Kushana deposit (ii) Coin moulds of Kanishka and Huvishka (iii) Burnt brick structures	IAR, 2002-03, pp.57-66.
10.	Karsola Kheda (29° 09' N, 76° 25' E)	Jind	Period I- Harappans, PGW, Overlap between late Harappan and PGW culture (c. 1400–600 BCE) Period II early historic 1 <sup>st</sup> Century BC- 6 <sup>th</sup> century AD (Kushana/Gupta).	Pottery belonging to three cultural phases, including Late Harappan and PGW, and Early Historic (Kushana /Gupta).	Vasant Shinde 2010-11, IAR-2010-11, pp-44.

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