

Archaeological Explorations in Jewar-Tappal-Nohjhil area, Western U.P.

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Abstract

Jewar has been in news due to an international airport coming up there. But prior to that, Jewar in District Gautam Buddha Nagar and nearby town Tappal in District Aligarh of Uttar Pradesh were known as important towns of the region. The area along river Yamuna in a strip of about 20 km toward its left bank from Nohjhil town in District Mathura to Tappal and Jewar was taken up for explorations to understand the nature of sites and the archaeological cultures. The Yamuna Expressway connecting Noida and Agra has already affected the landscape of the area and the upcoming international airport may bring out some categorical changes in overall socio-economic and cultural landscape of the area. The results of the exploration have been quite rewarding as about fifty archaeological sites came to notice, the earliest chronology going back to the Painted Grey Ware cultural period and some new settlements coming up during the early centuries of the Common Era.

Key-words

Jewar, Tappal, Mathura, PGW, Yamuna, Early centuries of the Christian Era

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As part of an exploration project undertaken with the Archaeological Survey of India, an area of 20 km width to the left of the river course of Yamuna lying between Jewar (District Gautam Buddha Nagar) and Nohjhil (District Mathura) was explored in the field season 2017-18. This geographical area consists of the fertile *khadar* soil near the Yamuna, the undulating sandy ground in between the *khadar* and fertile agricultural fields; and the fertile plain. The climate of the area is semi-arid with average annual rainfall 80 cm. The major towns in the stretch are Jewar, Jahangirpur (both in Dt. Gautam Buddha Nagar), Tappal, Jattari, Gomat (all three in Dt. Aligarh), Nohjhil and Bajna (both in Dt. Mathura). The stretch has seen a major change in socio-economic conditions due to construction of Yamuna Expressway connecting Noida with Agra and the proximity to Greater Noida area. The upcoming International Airport at Jewar in this zone is going to change the overall socio-economic conditions of the area and may have an impact on the archaeological landscape of the area. The previously done archaeological surveys have provided a glimpse into the archaeological picture of the larger area where we know of few Ochre Coloured Pottery (OCP) culture sites in other parts of District Aligarh and Bulandshahr (Sahi 2007: 155-164 and Tripathi 2012: Appendix 318-334). In Noida area too, there are few sites which have been reported as having late Harappan affinity. Painted Grey Ware (PGW) culture is known as the more prominent early culture in the area from most of the sites, particularly in the Mathura region as known from the field work of the first author in the area (Gupta 2013). A number of archaeological settlements might have come up during the early centuries of the Common Era. River Yamuna is believed to have played an important role in the early settlement of this area. The present archaeological survey was undertaken to ascertain any missing links between the OCP, Late Harappan and PGW periods in the area and to prepare a settlement pattern of the stretch and comparing it with other better explored areas in the region, particularly the areas close to Mathura.

As a result of detailed archaeological explorations in the form of village to village survey in the area following archaeological sites came to light (Map. 1):

1. Khera Barauth/ Bagharra (27.83616, 77.68342)

Size: 450 x 370 x 5 m

The mound is situated outside the village and is largely unoccupied except for a modern temple.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware (Site belongs from the early Centuries of Common Era to the early medieval period)

2. Mound outside Nohjhil (27.84491, 77.64110)

Size: 80 x 70 x 1 m

The site is situated outside ancient town and is partly occupied by a medieval structure now in much dilapidated condition. The structure uses temple remains of *circa* ninth-tenth century CE (Pl. 1).

Cultural sequence: Red Ware (Possibly religious, Site belongs from the early Centuries of Common Era to medieval period)

3. **Nohjhil** (27°50'53.97"N, 77°38'41.66"E)

Size: 600 x 450 x 16 m

The site is partially occupied by the modern habitation including a Police Station but has a portion still free of occupation.

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, BRW, NBPW, Grey Ware, Red Ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period. The site was first reported in *IAR* 1982-83.

4. **Musamna** (27.85353, 77.57648)

Size: 350 x 320 x 6 m

The site is occupied by the modern village but for a small area which is still unoccupied. Situated on Punth soil.

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, Grey Ware, Red Ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

5. **Sati Ka Nagla** (27.88497, 77.60636)

Size: 900 x 600 x 3 m

The mound is situated between Bhagat Bhaktariya and Sati Ka Nagla villages, unoccupied, is being used for agriculture (Pl. 2).

Cultural sequence: Red ware (Early Centuries to early medieval period).

6. **Kurawali** (27°52'46.35"N, 77°36'26.64"E)

Size: 600 x 400 x 2 m

The mound is situated outside the village and is unoccupied, is being used for agriculture.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware (Early Centuries to early medieval period)

7. **Singoni** (27.90356, 77.59754)

Size: 250 x 220 x 8 m

The site is situated over Punth soil and is completely occupied by the modern day village.

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, Grey Ware, Red Ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

8. **Pakhodana** (27°55'15.41"N, 77°33'16.29"E)

Size: 300 x 260 x 8 m

The site (Pl. 3) is situated over Punth soil and is partly occupied by the present day village.

Cultural sequence: PGW, Red Ware, Grey Ware, BSW, NBPW. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period. A broken terracotta image of Mahishasuramardini of post-Gupta period was observed at a local shrine (Pl. 4).

9. **Ratangarhi** (27°55'27.97"N, 77°34'23.94"E)

Size: 300 x 280 x 2 m

The site is situated near a Saiyyad and is being used for agriculture.

Cultural sequence: Red ware (Early Centuries to Medieval period)

10. **Untasani** (27°56'46.72"N, 77°34'23.49"E)

Size: 300 x 240 x 12 m

The site is situated over Punth soil and is occupied by the modern village.

Cultural sequence: BSW, Grey Ware, Red ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

11. **Malab** (27.96223, 77.55923)

Size: 380 x 280 x 11 m

The is occupied by the modern village and a lofty part of the mound is occupied by a modern temple named Markandeya Rishi Mandir where the priests have occupied the whole mound and are telling the pilgrims that this is the place of Rishi Markandeya from which the village derives its name.

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, BRW, Grey Ware, Red ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

12. **Utwara** (27.9679, 77.58556)

Size: 380 x 320 x 10 m

The huge mound is completely occupied by the modern village.

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, BRW, Grey Ware, Red ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

13. **Palar** (27.97607, 77.59015)

Size: 300 x 240 x 6 m

The site is occupied by the modern village.

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, BRW, Grey Ware, Red ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

14. **Jahangarh** (28.01669923, 77.57972821)

Size: 280 x 220 x 9 m

The site is fully occupied by the modern habitation. Kushan period bricks were observed as being reused in a modern wall (Pl. 5).

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, Red Ware. PGW, BSW, BRW, Grey Ware, Red ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

15. **Tappal** (28.0448619, 77.4746584)

Size: 600 x 450 x 12 m

The site is occupied by the modern habitation, only a portion is still free of occupation, but is being lost rapidly by cutting (Pl. 6).

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, BRW, NBPW, Grey Ware, Red Ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

16. **Jewar** (28°7'20.93"N, 77°33'23.77"E)

Size: 700 x 500 x 13 m

The site is completely occupied by the modern habitation. In ancient times, the town was possibly known as Yayavara grama, though, the legend now associates it with Jabali rishi.

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, BRW, NBPW, Grey Ware, Red Ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

17. **Thora** (28.1407972, 77.63862292)

Size: 450 x 350 x 12 m

The site is fully occupied by the modern village habitation (Pl. 7). The village has a late medieval temple (Pl. 8) with rare paintings in the *garbhagriha*. The painting on the ceiling in a large panel covering the entire dome depicts a beautiful *maharasa* scene (Pl. 9) and may belong to early eighteenth century.

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, BRW, Grey Ware, Red Ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

18. **Maur Khera** (28.10176853, 77.65403321)

Size: 240 x 180 x 7 m

The site is occupied by the modern habitation. The name of the site might have got derived from the same legend as the ancient site Mora in District Mathura.

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, Grey Ware, Red Ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

19. **Dhansiya** (28.16357821, 77.6548607)

Size: 200 x 180 x 4 m

The site is occupied by the modern village.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates from the early centuries of the Common era to early medieval period.

20. **Parori** (28.16983848, 77.6785152)

Size: 180 x 150 x 3 m

The site is occupied by the modern village.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates from the early centuries of the Common era to early medieval period.

21. **Jahangirpur** (28.17858255, 77.70387973)

Size: 200 x 180 x 4 m

The site is occupied by the modern town.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates back to the early medieval period.

22. **Bhabokra** (28.1191472, 77.64763648)

Size: 180 x 150 x 2 m

The site is occupied by the modern village.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates back to the early medieval period.

23. **Palsera** (28.07514691, 77.67343413)

Size: 150 x 120 x 2 m

The site is occupied by the modern town.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates back to the early medieval period.

24. **Devrar** (28.1272821, 77.66147938)

Size: 150 x 110 x 2 m

The site is occupied by the modern town.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates back to the early medieval period.

25. **Jattari** (28° 1'20.03"N, 77°39'20.16"E)

Size: 200 x 180 x 4 m

The site is occupied by the modern town.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates back to the early medieval period.

26. **Khandeh** (28° 2'50.61"N, 77°37'36.46"E)

Size: 150 x 140 x 2 m

The site is occupied by the modern town.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates back to the early medieval period.

27. **Kurana** (28.02878316, 77.6214561)

Size: 150 x 140 x 2 m

The site is occupied by the modern town.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates back to the early medieval period.

28. **Bajna** (27°53'54.94"N, 77°40'43.24"E)

Size: 700 x 500 x 10 m

The site is completely occupied by the modern habitation. The ancient part of town is located at Uparkot mohalla. It would have been the most important urban center of the area.

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, BRW, NBPW, Grey Ware, Red Ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

29. **Palkhera** (27°50'27.80"N, 77°43'9.13"E)

Size: 400 x 300 x 9 m

The site is completely occupied by the modern habitation.

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, BRW, NBPW, Grey Ware, Red Ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

30. **Lamtori** (27°48'17.51"N, 77°43'43.76"E)

Size: 200 x 180 x 5 m

The site is completely occupied by the modern habitation.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates from the early centuries of the Common era to early medieval period.

31. **Barauth** (27°51'12.23"N, 77°41'59.04"E)

Size: 200 x 180 x 5 m

The site is completely occupied by the modern habitation.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates from the early centuries of the Common era to early medieval period.

32. **Sailaka** (27.86125345N, 77.69838733E)

Size: 200 x 180 x 5 m

The site is completely occupied by the modern habitation.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates from the early centuries of the Common era to early medieval period.

33. **Shall** (27°53'13.34"N, 77°43'10.76"E)

Size: 180 x 150 x 7 m

The site is completely occupied by the modern habitation.

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, Grey Ware, Red Ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

34. **Pachahra** (27.89699209N, 77.75180733E)

Size: 180 x 150 x 7 m

The site is completely occupied by the modern habitation.

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, Grey Ware, Red Ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

35. **Parsauli** (27.87775958N, 77.69324321E)

Size: 200 x 180 x 5 m

The site is completely occupied by the modern habitation.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates from the early centuries of the Common era to early medieval period.

36. **Jarailiya** (27°53'19.11"N, 77°40'39.14"E)

Size: 200 x 180 x 5 m

The site is completely occupied by the modern habitation and is situated on the bank of Patwaha nala. It would have served as an extension of Bajna.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates from the early centuries of the Common era to early medieval period.

37. **Kaulahar** (27°55'14.41"N, 77°43'54.92"E)

Size: 250 x 180 x 7 m

The site is completely occupied by the modern habitation.

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, Grey Ware, Red Ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

38. **Shiwala Kalan** (27°56'11.89"N, 77°45'23.51"E)

Size: 270 x 190 x 8 m

The site is completely occupied by the modern habitation.

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, Grey Ware, Red Ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

39. **Khera outside Edalpur** (27°53'47.18"N, 77°47'47.91"E)

Size: 280 x 250 x 9 m

The site is an isolated mound near the Ganga nahar. Modern temple with fragmentary sculptural remains exists at the site.

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, Grey Ware, NBPW, Red Ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

40. **Kaulana** (27°53'47.90"N, 77°38'56.58"E)

Size: 220 x 180 x 7 m

The site is completely occupied by the modern habitation.

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, Grey Ware, Red Ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

41. **Ghangauli** (27°56'23.36"N, 77°36'57.38"E)

Size: 180 x 150 x 7 m

The site is completely occupied by the modern habitation.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates from the early centuries of the Common era to early medieval period.

42. **Bagheshwari Devi Mandir site** (27°54'56.34"N, 77°40'28.09"E)

Size: 200 x 180 x 2 m

The site is situated between villages of Khanpur and Mundaliya. Temple of Bagheshwari Devi is situated at the much destroyed site amongst the agricultural fields.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates from the early centuries of the Common era to early medieval period.

43. **Sakatpur** (27°56'45.85"N, 77°39'47.21"E)

Size: 180 x 120 x 4 m

The site is completely occupied by the modern habitation.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates from the early centuries of the Common era to early medieval period.

44. **Salpur** (27°57'26.44"N, 77°40'52.27"E)

Size: 200 x 180 x 5 m

The site is completely occupied by the modern village habitation.

Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates from the early centuries of the Common era to early medieval period.

45. **Baraut** (27°55'30.36"N, 77°41'47.24"E)

Size: 280 x 250 x 7 m

The site is completely occupied by the modern habitation.

Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, Grey Ware, Red Ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

46. **Simrauthi** (27°59'16.18"N, 77°35'52.78"E)
Size: 150 x 140 x 3 m
The site is occupied by the modern village.
Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates back to the early medieval period.
47. **Gomat** (27°56'45.87"N, 77°47'34.52"E)
Size: 600 x 500 x 10 m
The site is a huge mound occupied by the modern village.
Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, Grey Ware, NBPW, Red Ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.
48. **Baghai** (27°54'34.59"N, 77°39'11.97"E)
Size: 150 x 140 x 3 m
The site is occupied by the modern village.
Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates back to the early medieval period.
49. **Goraula** (27°57'29.59"N, 77°37'19.61"E)
Size: 250 x 200 x 5 m
The site is occupied by the modern village.
Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates back to the early medieval period.
50. **Waina** (28° 5'49.45"N, 77°36'0.39"E)
Size: 200 x 180 x 4 m
The site is occupied by the modern village.
Cultural sequence: Red Ware. The site dates back to the early medieval period.
51. **Syarol** (28.07614 N, 77.57722 E)
Size: 260 x 220 x 9 m
The site is occupied by the modern village.
Cultural sequence: PGW, BSW, Grey Ware, Red Ware. The site dates from the PGW period to early medieval period.

Conclusion:

Out of 51 above-reported sites, 24 sites date back to the PGW cultural period, 15 sites date back to the early centuries of the Common Era and the rest came into existence during the early medieval period. All the large scale settlements in the area were in existence during the early medieval period, though at many sites because of overlying modern habitation it is difficult to ascertain the cultural past accurately.

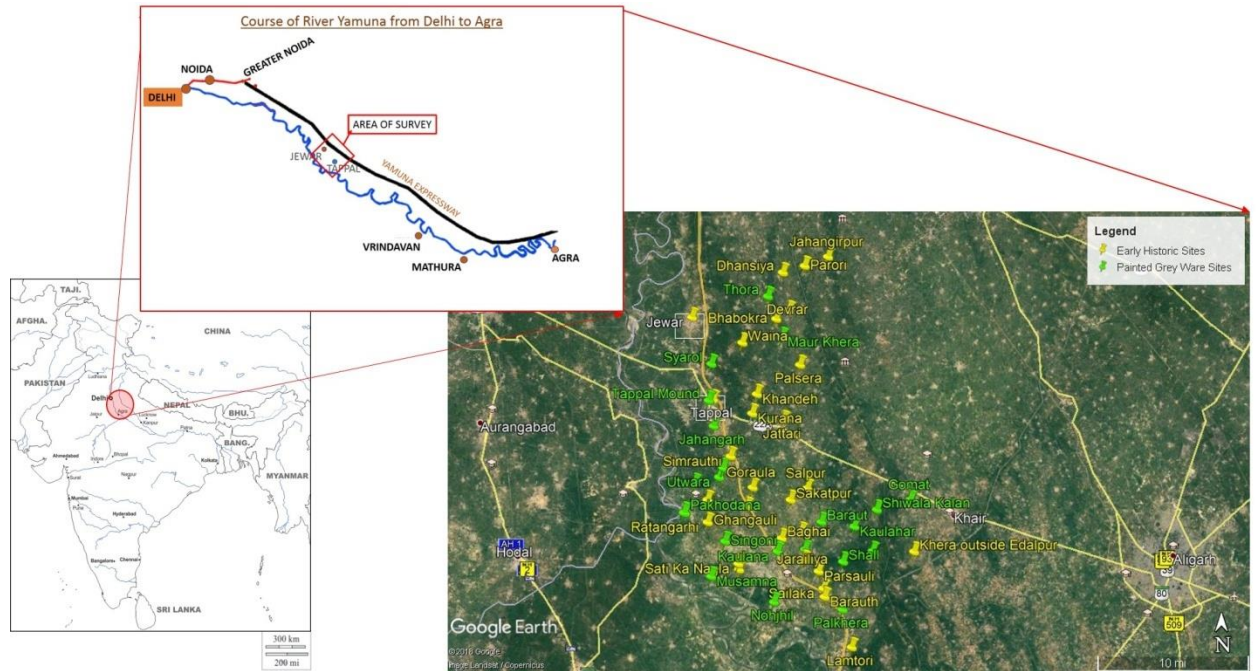
There is a pattern of PGW settlements following Yamuna and also on important routes particularly the one joining Bajna with Gomat which further reaches Aligarh via Khair. Jewar, Tappal, Gomat, Nohjhil, Bajna may qualify as ancient towns or smaller cities. Bajna seems to be the most important center in the region as almost all routes connect to Bajna. It appears that the Yamuna has shifted its course by kilometers in the area as few major sites like Jewar and Tappal lie about 7 km away from the present Yamuna course. In between the present river course and these major sites, no other ancient site could be located. Near the Mathura-Aligarh border, there are few PGW sites which are quite nearer to river Yamuna. There is a possibility that the ancient settlers preferred some distance from the river while settling there. The most important hint is provided by the sites of Naujhil and Shergarh which are located in front of each other across Yamuna. Both are PGW period settlements but Shergarh is located just along the river on its right bank whereas Nohjhil is situated on the left bank of the river but at present is significantly distant from the river course. Downside, there are sites like Bhidauni, Bhadravan and Manth which are situated too close to the river course in spite of being situated on the left bank. In a general comparison with sites situated closer to Mathura, it is observed that except for the major sites, the village settlements of the past are smaller and also are situated at a greater distance comparatively. The location of PGW sites along the river course and important trade routes is somewhat different from the sites situated closer to Mathura as the latter do not follow just a river course or an ancient route. No success could be obtained in finding any earlier evidence than the PGW culture as the sites are fully occupied by the modern settlements leaving almost no scope for detailed analysis. Only Edalpur Khera and Nohjhil, two of the PGW sites have isolated mounds which are free of modern occupation up to certain extent and both lie in Mathura district.

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Map 1



Pl. 1. Medieval structure outside Nohjhil town with temple remains of *circa* ninth-tenth century CE.



Pl. 2. General view of Sati Nagla mound.



Pl. 3. General view of unoccupied portion of Pakhodna mound.



Pl. 4. Mahishasuramardini image in terracotta, Pakhodna village.



Pl. 5. Kushan period brick used in a modern wall, Jahangarh.



Pl. 6. General view of Tappal mound.



Pl. 7. General view of Thora mound.



Pl. 8. Late medieval temple, Thora.



Pl. 9. Maharasalila panel, Old temple, Thora.