



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Bhakar Fort: A Historical and Archaeological Prospective**

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**ABSTRACT**

Bakhar fort is situated on a small hill fortified in between the flow of the present River Indus at the Sukkar and Rohri city of Sindh. The oval-shaped building constructed with bastions burnt bricks and the foundation is laid on stones. The Laysdown Bridge which connected the two main cities Rohri and Sukkar of Sindh divided the site into two portions northern and southern, the study focused to ascertain the historical and archaeological importance of the site and to find out the exact chronology and time depth of the fort. For this purpose, primary and secondary sources were used to analyze the surface and collected cultural material. It has been found from the study the chronology and time depth of the fort has not been done before it. The study suggests that the site should be protected and renovated with the involvement of historian and archeologist.

**Keywords**

Archaeology, Chronology, History, Indus River, Rohri Hills

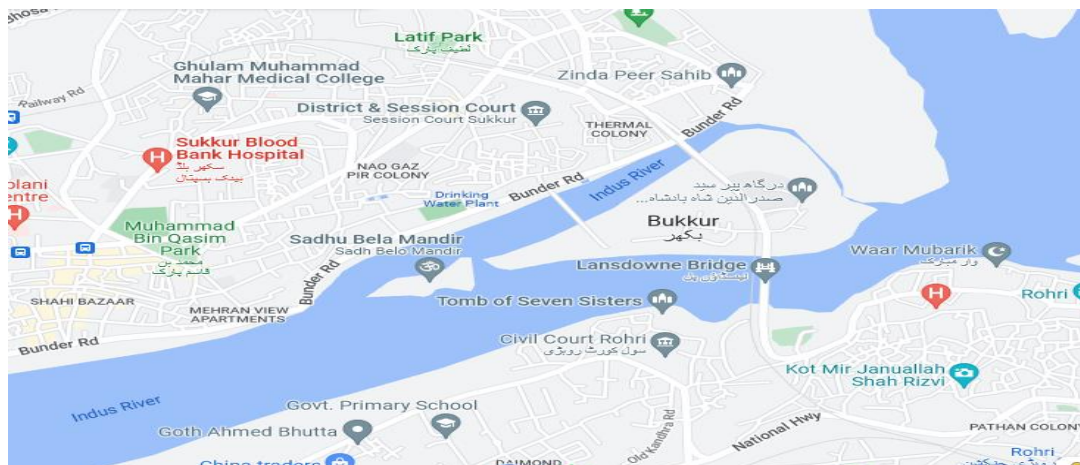
**Introduction**

Rohri hills is an area of land where stone age archaeological sites are scattered over the hills from different periods as lower Middle and Upper Palaeolithic ages and also prepared chert stone tools of Indus Valley civilization 2500 BC to 1750 BC. Rohri hills are located in upper Sindh including Sukhar and Khairpur District. Its long axes are north to south measuring 70 Kilometers and East to West measuring 25 Kilometers at the height of 100 to 150 meters above alluvial land. The climate of Rohri hills is very dry in the month of May, June, July and August with 40 centigrade to 50 centigrade temperatures is recorded and winter from December to January is very cold. The hills are totally barren due to low rain fall but somewhere valleys are green.

The first archaeological remains are reported by Blandford in 1886 in his geological investigation of upper Sindh. He describing the geological and geomorphologic aspects of the lime stone fo Rohri Hills Bland ford reports the occurrence of large masses of flint nodule workshops at Rohri hills (Blandford 1877). After 50 years later Rohri hills is reported by Henery Cousens in 1929 and soon after by De Terra Paterson in 1939. De Terra Paterson is first person point out the presence of both Palaeolithic period Indus valley civilization assemblages on the top mesas of the hills, In 1975-77 Bridget Allechin and Raymond Allchin came and visited northern and southern edges of hills found extensive of Indus valley chipping floors near Sukkar and Rohri,(Allachin 1982). he reported the flint nodules and artifacts as blades made from chert stone transported by boat thorough river Indus down to the Mohen Jo Daro and up to the Harrappa (Sahiwal, Punjab) and also throughout the extend of

Indus valley civilization on the bases of exchange system of trade. In 1986 Dr. Paolo Biagi Professor of Historical Archeological and Oriental Sciences, University of Venice Italy came at Shah Abdu Latif University Khairpur reports that Rohri hills is rich in prehistoric Stone Age. In 1993, he make plan of archeological investigation and started field work on the hills near the shrine of Shadi Shaheed and is surrounded recorded more than 1200 workshops single pits chipping activities (Biagi 1994), remove the flakes for preparing the stone tools (30,000-15000 BC) are scattered. Later in 2004 Frontier works organization (FWO) constructed Motor way Rohri by pass blast the hillls Than, informed to the chiar of the department of Archaeology, Shah Abdul Latif University Khairpur, initiative small scale excavation at cave site near Rohri some south of Cement factory but not any single archeological remains are found, while the top surface of same hill visited found 06 workshops of middle and upper palaeolithic culture and 15 Indus valley civilization tool making spots were observed But now a day the same hills is disappear due to crash stone for construction. In 2005 Professor Dr. Ghulam Muhiuddin Veesar reported 96 sites as Middle Palaeolithic and Upper Palaeolithic workshops at the southern tip of Rohri hills where Rohri hills meet the Thar desert. He explore 47 chipping activity of Mesolithic tools (10,000-8000 BC) at all around the lakes near Thari Mirwah Taluka of Khairpur. Since longtime Rohri hills have threats Locals sweep the stone from top surface heaps were mixed with prehistoric tools. Rohri hills still under the mine department, Government of Sindh allocated lease the powerful persons for crushing the stone. Presently more the 50 crush machines crushing the stone for construction purposes and damaging our cultural antiquity of Sindh at observed no any sites signboard fixed by the concerned department. Recently culture department Government of Sindh takeover these cultural heritage. Being researcher, It is suggested to the culture department Government of Sindh to please survey the total area of Rohri hills documented scientifically. And fix signboard.

In between Rohri and Sukhar in the mind stream of river Indus, there are some inslands known as Bakhar, Sadh Bela known as Khaja Khizr. The biggest o all island is Bakhar located longitude 68, 52, 45 East, latitude 27, 41, 40 North. (Map #01) It is ova in shape measuring 623.50 meters from east to west and 276 meters wide from north to south with 7.50 meters from present water flow of Indus river. The total width of river between Sukkar Rohri town, including the island of Bakhar being 623 meters to 653 meters wide. There is bridge of railway crossing called Lysdown Bridge. Map #1 Shows the location of Bakhar fort (Google, 2022)



## Material and Method

For this research included both data of research d as primary and secondary data researcher started library analysis to read the relevant historical books in various libraries and also make field trips in time to time collected cultural material from the surface of the site for analysis.

### **Name of Bhakar**

Raverty M.G. mention in his book Mehran and its tributaries, in ancient time Bakhar called Bekhar, and was the center of the trade and commerce. The author of Tarikh-e-Lab mention first fort was built by Arab Caliph Haroon-ur-Rashid and named First Alama Abu-al-Abbas Ahmed bin Yaha Jabar Blazari discuss two cities Alore and bagror, possible wee Alore and Bakhar, A famous and authentic book Chach Namah mention Bakhar is ancient as Alore, and arab travellor Ibn Battota came in 733 AH at Bakhar. Sheedia Raimdad Khan describing in his book Sindh Ja Purana Shahar that Sagdi caste living at Bakhar at the time of Alaxandar the great in 327 BC Bakhar was under the Alore. Professor Mahboob Ali Channa describing the construction of Bakhar which was built in the Abbasid period and also he prove that when Muhammad bin Qasim conquered Alore Bakhar was present and was the property of Raja Dahar son of Chach.

### **Extends**

The fort is located just opposite of Rohri hills / Rohri town known as Khawaja Khizr. It contains the shrine of a legendary saint Zinda pir. The biggest of all Islands is Bakhar and it is oval in shape measuring 800 yards from east to west and about 300 yards wide 25 feet high from the present level (Siddiqi 1972). The fort have fortified wall extent at some places with number of bastions of semicircular shape (Fig# 1) with gates of different sizes and these gates are blocked with rubble stones (Fig# 2) . The railway line divides the island into two parts (Shaikh 2005).

Fig #1.

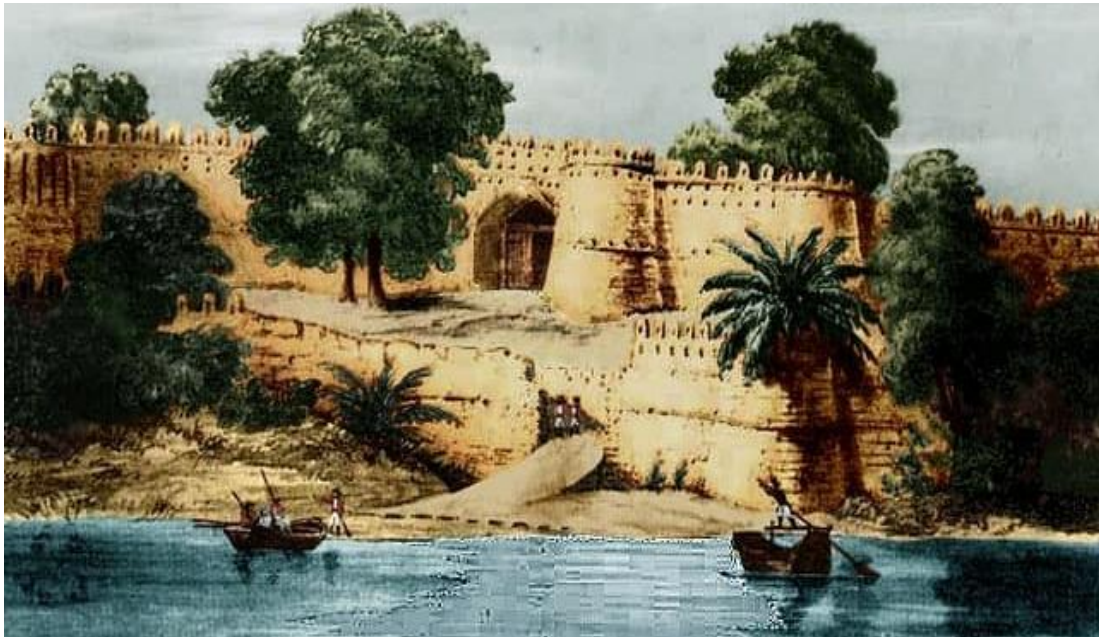
General view from the western side of the fortification wall of Bakhar fort





Fig #2

Shows the front side of main gate



### Historical Background of Bakhar Fort

Historian describing Bakhar fort with historical reference as *Tarikh-e-Lab* mention the origin of Bakhar date back to Arab period 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. And also showing the date construction of the fort can be derived from Bala Hisar, it comes 944-45 AD. There is some historical accounts that during the region of caliph Harn-ur-Rashid, the Bakhar was reconstructed and named as Farishita. A famous book *Tuhfat-ul-kirams* version is that the place was named as Bakhar instead of Farishta by syed Muhammad Makki, who came from Yeman to Sindh In 1246-47 AD, and also describing that there is popular tradition that Syed Muhammad Makkhi while arriving at this place expressed his feeling by saying Gad has downed our day in a blessed place. The place came to be known as Bakhar or Baqar and from it the name changed to Bakhar

The Bakhar remained under the occupation of Sultans of Delhi Nasiruddin Qabacha, when he returns from Uch by his Wazir Altamash took refuge in Bakhar fort in 1228 AD. After the death of Muhammad bin Tughlaq at Sonda near Thatta on 1351 AD. Then, Feroz Tughlaq was crowned as the new emperor. In 1365 AD Feroz Tughlaq came to Sindh to take action against the Suamma rulers visited Bakhar and placed the fleet of the one thousand boats According to *Tarikh-e-Masumi* Shah Baig Argun was very much pleased to see the fort. He inspected the quarters and housed and allotted these to the nobles and soldiers. He surveyed the fort and divided it among the nobles, so that they could built it gradually, The fortress of Alore, which was formally the seat of Government, was demolished and its baked bricks were carried to Bakhar, Some of the houses Turkhans and the Samma which stood around Bakhar were destroyed and materials were utilized in the construction of fort.

During the time when the foundation of fort was being laid down Shah Baig Argun said to his son Mirza Shah Hassan These tow hills which are situate on the southern side of the fort are dangerous head strikes against this fort we should first

of al give our attention to these hillocks and then proceed to the construction of the fort. The building of the fort was completed in a very short itme, Shah Bain Argun decided to reside in the capital himself along with Mirza Shah Hassan and gave some quarters to some of the nobles.

Mughal emperor Hamayun visited Sindh in 1541 AD and wanted to occupy Bakhar. In his time the Bakhar fort had got double walls, the outer enveloping wall with four gates with seventy bastions. At that time the circumference of the fort was 1875 yards. Emperor Akhar has constituted Bakhar as a separate Sarkar and taken it away from Turkhans.

After the downfall of Mughal (17<sup>th</sup> century AD) Bakhar was passed on to Kolhora (18<sup>th</sup> Century AD) and subsequently to Talpur Ameers (19<sup>th</sup> Century AD).

On the British occupation of Sindh, They took over the island from the Talpur of Khairpur as per treaty of 1838 AD and named it a *Victoria*. But the new name could not gain popularity. The island is still known as Bakhar.

### **Conservation of Bakhar fort**

The conservation of Bakhar fort seen in the period, when the previous Hindu capital Alore was consent danger of attacks, the Arab rebuilt Bakhar

Mahmood Ghaznavid in 1026 AD. His wazir Abdul Razzak conquer the Sindh. He sacked Bakhar, Sehwan and Mansurah. He lived in Bakhar for two years and made some modification in Bakhar fort.

Shah Baig Argun in 1522 AD renovated the Bakhar fort. The bricks of ancient fort of Alore, the old capital of Sindh as well as the material of the building belongs to the Turkhans and Sammas living round the fort were brought and utilized in repairing the fort walls and houses and also erected 30-35 feet high double wall with two main gates one from north and other from southern side and tow bastions were built, where the criminals were being punished and thrown into river.

At the time of arrival of the Mughal emperor Hamayoon in 1536 AD Muhammad Khan built an outer enveloping wall to the fort with four gates and 70 bastions enclosed within this were two gardens named *Nuzargah and Guzargah'*.

Nadir Shah attacked the Sindh in 1739 AD, rebuilt Bakhar fort, the fort was restored by the Governor Nawab Ghulam Sadik Khan about 1778 AD. Then, 1839 AD Mir Rustam Khan Talpur handed it over to the British. A treaty was signed by them to use the Bakhar as army base. The British Government spent lots of money to repair the fort.

### **Archaeology of Bakhar fort**

Archaeological prospective are rely on the surface scattered cultural material which were collected in different times by the team of the department of Archaeology from 1976 to 2007. Sometimes artifacts are collected by the student trips, visits arranged by the department which is kept in the reserve store of the department of Archeology. With prior permission from worthy Chairperson, department of Archaeology, researcher open the boxes and analysis the artifacts After the processing of washing, cleaning and conservation and cataloguing found different variety of broken pieces of pottery sherds as plain rim body sherds, painted rim body sherds,

glazed plates, bowls, painted glazed tiles and applique design cooking vessels animals figurines, oil lamps, stands, and lime stone balls.

### Plain and Painted Pottery

It is observed that mostly vessels were painted in different geometric design as triangles horizontal and vertical lines on red and fine red slip of thin and medium body wall sherds, designs are indicating that poor and local designs are used low level people of Bakhar. The royal people use those vessels, which were made from metals as copper, bronze, gilt, zinc and high precious metal of silver and gold. BK.2K6.71 black design over cream slip from both surface, BK.2k6 72, medium in body wall with black rough circular lines on white glazed. BK.2K6.73 medium in body wall raised thin line on outer surface. Designs show the cultural affiliation with Early Islamic period of Bhanbhore. BK.2K6.53 Body sherd of big jar outside raised dots and star in circle on sandy coated surface BK.2K654 embossed dots an star in between parallel bands with fine mica is also present. BK.2K6 55. Body sherd with embossed dots in between parallel line and geometric triangle with fine mica is present. BK.2K6 56. Body sherds of jar with medium texture outside impressed dots and incised lines, almost contemporary with Mansurah pottery of historic period (Fig#3).



Plain ridged rim body sherd surface collection.

### Glazed Pottery

During the surface survey found majority of sherds of glazed pottery of decorated plates bowls in different colors and designs. The designs are painted in inside of the vessels polychrome colors are used in floral designs on glaze, such type of decoration are used as beautification (**Fig #03**). And also clay tiles are used and found during the visits in 1992 Professor Dr. Muhammad Mukhtiar Kazi researcher suddenly visit the Bakhar from the west of shrine of Sadar uddin Shah base foundation was digging by the Government contractor for the construction new Government buildings where noticed painted tiles from floors (Fig# 4). Shows glazed body sherds, plates

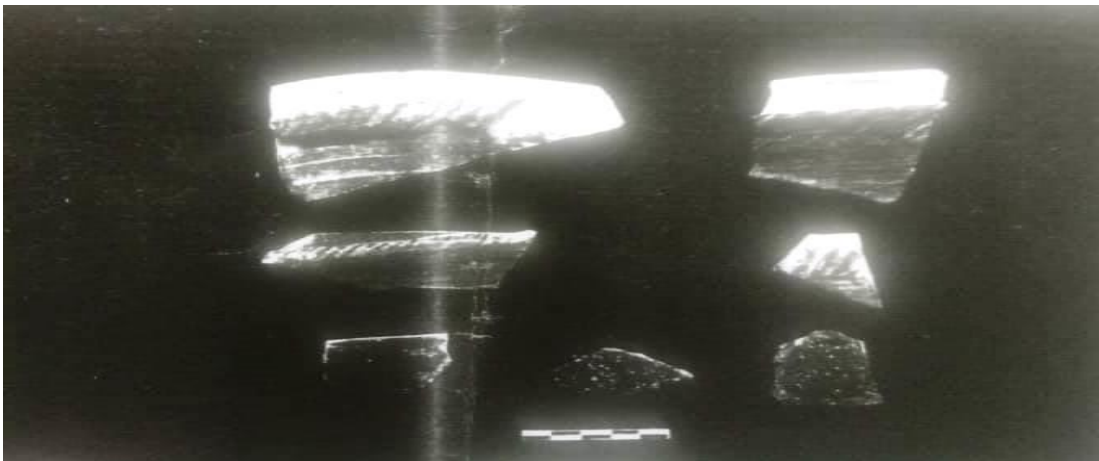


### Applique/ Surface Coated Pottery

Applique design is used only for cooking vessels from the site Bakhar, during visit found some sherds of applique design this design is coated for resist the heat. BK.2K6.36 is base boy of cooking vessel thin in body wall with inside fine mica is present and outside thin incised slash lines and light black line is visible BK2K6 48. Is body sherd thick in body wall outside clay coated applique design BK.2K6.51 medium boy sherd of vessel without side is clay coated with three thick red bands on upper body.

### Fig #5

Shows applique/ surface clay coated design body of cooking vessel from surface



### Other Objects

Other objects includes 03 oil lamps, one of them is broken triangle base, complete vase type base for flowering for decoration purpose (Fig #05), dog animal figurine and camel figurine with broken legs, incised line with depicting holes indicating saddle small lid with knob an neck sherd of smoking pipe (Fig #06). 03 lime stone balls, one is broken with blackish, indicating fire activity.

### Fig #6

Shows oil lamps triangular base and stand





### Conclusion and Recommendation:

The Archaeological perspective relies on the surface scattered cultural material such as the variety of broken pieces of pottery sherds as plain rim body sherds, painted rim body sherds, glazed plates, bowls, painted glazed tiles, and applique design cooking vessels animals figurines, oil lamps, stands, and limestone balls which were collected in different times. It is observed that most vessels were painted in different geometric designs as triangles horizontal and vertical lines on a red and fine red slip of thin and medium body wall sherds. Designs show the cultural affiliation with the Early Islamic period of Bhanbhore and contemporary with Mansurah pottery. The study suggests that the site should be protected and renovated with the involvement of historian and archeologist.

**Table 01**  
**Shows ruling dynasty, occupying the Bakhar Fort.**

| S.NO | Ruling Dynasty                        | Time Period |         | Years  |
|------|---------------------------------------|-------------|---------|--------|
|      |                                       | From        | To      |        |
| 01   | Shaikh Abu Turab first built & occupy | 787 AD      | 1026 AD | 239 Ys |
| 02   | Mahmood Gaznavi conquer               | 1026 AD     | 1247 AD | 221 Ys |
| 03   | Muhammad Bin Alsaad take off          | 1227 AD     | 1294 AD | 67 Ys  |
| 04   | Allauddin Khalji under position       | 1294 AD     | 1351 AD | 57 Ys  |
| 05   | Feroz Shah Tughlaq under control      | 1351 AD     | 1354 AD | 3 Ys   |
| 06   | Sama rural local Tribe of Sindh       | 1354 AD     | 1555 AD | 1 Ys   |
| 07   | Shah Baig Arjun conquer and destroy   | 1555 AD     | 1600 AD | 45 Ys  |
| 08   | Mughals occupy the fort               | 1600 AD     | 1700 AD | 100 Ys |
| 09   | Kalhora Dynasty and his residence     | 1700 AD     | 1783 AD | 83 Ys  |
| 10   | Talpur Rural of Khairpur state        | 1783 AD     | 1843 AD | 60 Ys  |
| 11   | Birtisher                             | 1843 AD     | 1947 AD | 104 Ys |



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