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## Public Archaeology and Community Engagement in Sindh: A Model for Heritage Preservation

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### ABSTRACT

Community heritage management has increasingly emerged as an important global approach that emphasizes the shared responsibility of local communities and governmental institutions in the sustainable conservation of cultural heritage. This study presents an ethno-archaeological analysis of community-led heritage management practices focusing on shrines, archaeological and historical sites, living heritage, and cultural landscapes within the framework of UNESCO and ICOMOS heritage conservation guidelines. Evidence from Sindh and other international community-based heritage initiatives demonstrates that local communities often act as effective custodians of heritage resources, contributing to site protection and reducing encroachment, vandalism, destruction, and antiquities trafficking. Despite facing challenges such as limited institutional capacity, lack of legal recognition, and socio-political constraints, community movements have played a significant role in heritage preservation. Notable examples include resistance to mining at Karonjhar Mountain, the Darya Bachayo Tehreek for the protection of the Indus River, and the survival of traditional crafts such as boat making, masonry, basketry, embroidery, and wood and stone carving. The study recommends an integrated community-led framework that strengthens grassroots participation while promoting collaboration with formal heritage institutions for sustainable heritage management.

**Keywords:** Community led Heritage Management, UNESCO- ICOMOS, Professional & community based collaboration , Sindhi heritage resilience.

### INTRODUCTION

Archaeology defines heritage scientifically as archived cultural and technological legacy of ancient societies and communities, like rest of world

archaeological sites in Sindh Pakistan are not apart but ethnologically interconnected with encircled heritage communities, mounds, historical spaces, sacred shrines and landscape heritage. Communities maintain economic, cultural, belief and symbolic relations. It is seen since colonel era that heritage management in this region is state centralized, particularly and peculiarly expert dominant, excluding the community involvement. Undermining community skills cause short term unsatisfactory results and heritage left for further deterioration, encroachment and failure. Since decades worldwide heritage narrative is built to strengthen the participatory and community based approaches for heritage management, as an only sustainable paradigm through the local communities as main stakeholders rather than treating them as third party beneficiary.

### **Concepts and Principals of community led heritage management.**

Community led heritage management defines the central role of local communities in managing, identifying and safeguarding the heritage , community led heritage management emphasizes the frame work for shared authority, mainly focuses local empowerment, participation, shared responsibility, indigenous knowledge recognition and appreciation are key factors for sustainable community led heritage management. Archaeology recognizes and apprise the folk wisdom, environmental indigenous knowledge, oral traditions and customary practices which helps to align heritage management and conservation maneuvering through community led heritage management, which may line up with UNESCO policy of live heritage of continuous role of community and intergenerational transmission and also compatible with ICOMS concept of speaking the inclusive governance, stake holder and ethical responsibility. That is more challenging for Archaeologists, conservationists to deem professional role of community for heritage management.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Indus boats roamed within Indus Rivers, Sea and sailed to Mesopotamia and to international waters, presence of boats in Indus civilization can be seen on the seal depictions found from Indus civilization. Boats in Indus for short range local travel were made with reed bundles tide together upward with a cabin in center (Markenyor 1998; Harrapa.com). Later on reeds were replaced with timber and joints were coated with bitumen for preventing any leakage, still the modern boats are manufactured with same shape with modern techniques, modern adhesive solutions are used for tight bonding to prevent seepage (UNESCO 2017). Sukkur, Larkana, Jamshoro and Thatta are known for modern boat making centers I n Sindh, many bookmakers has abandoned this ancestral profession, demanding for governmental patronage to continue this traditional profession of boat making for new generation to understand historical, cultural and technological significance of indigenous boat making. Earlier evidence of basketry goes date back to Mehrgarh 7000 BC, the craftsmen of Mehrgarh used coil and weaving method for making basketry items ( Lechevallier, Quiviron 1981). Basketry encouraged potters to replace it, earlier the palm tree has been remained the source for basket making, the

palms were and still are the frequently available in the region of Makran (Kenoyer 2021). Modern basket making in Sindh is continuation of ancient one and best example of community led heritage management, basketry in Sindh has flourished along with various sizes, materials and shapes.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research paper qualitative and interpretative methods based on literature of participatory archaeology, heritage management, review of UNESCO and ICOMS policy and findings related to archaeological practices followed in Pakistan are analysed. A detailed analytical method is used to contextualize the working experience of international institutions with Pakistan, this paper deals with official working models, management practices. Institutional framework for participatory of government policies for community led heritage management.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Community led heritage management in Sindh, context and examples.**

Chronology of heritage in Sindh stretches from prehistoric, protohistoric, and historic up to British period structures, including communities interacting with living heritage and spaces every day. Some heritage based activities take place regularly and seasonally (Temporary migrants, festivals) while shrines (Hazrat Shah Abdul Bhattai, Abdullah Shah Ghazi, Lal Shehbaz Qalander, Sachal Sarmast, Jhok Shareef etc ) and sites (Mohen jo Daro, Banbhore, Makli, Chaukundi, Rani Kot, Karonjhar) are perennial active socio cultural spaces. Informally all this surfaces the stewardship of communities, protecting. Monitoring, cleaning and owing it. Communities consider heritage as integral source of their cultural identity and all done in this perspective mentioned above mainly remains informal without any government patronage. Services rendered by local communities are confined to certain limits due to know any institutional framework describe the role of community participation. Government institutions are authorized with bulk of powers, lesser community involvement which undermine the collaborative role for community led heritage management. International institutions. Culture and heritage experts look forward for community led heritage management, The UNESCO convention held in 2003, urged to safeguard the intangible heritage. Making mandatory the community led heritage management for preservation, identification and transmission in context where tangible and intangible heritages are equally jeopardized. ICOMOS through his charter and guidelines has frequently advocated for strengthened, collaboration, sustainability and shared ethical responsibility, obviously that can only be possible through community led heritage management.

**Fig No. 01, Indus Boats On Seal & River Indus**



(Source: Harappa.com)

Indus boats roamed within Indus Rivers, Sea and sailed to Mesopotamia and to international waters, presence of boats in Indus civilization can be seen on the seal depictions found from Indus civilization. Boats in Indus for short range local travel were made with reed bundles tied together upward with a cabin in center (Markenyor 1998; Harrappa.com). Later on reeds were replaced with timber and joints were coated with bitumen for preventing any leakage, still the modern boats are manufactured with same shape with modern techniques, modern adhesive solutions are used for tight bonding to prevent seepage (UNESCO 2017). Sukkur, Larkana, Jamshoro and Thatta are known for modern boat making centers in Sindh, many bootmakers has abandoned this ancestral profession, demanding for governmental patronage to continue this traditional profession of boatmaking for new generation to understand historical, cultural and technological significance of indigenous boatmaking.

**Fig No.02 Modern Seasonal Basket Making Worker**



**Fig No.03, Modern Basketry Plates**



**Source: Author**

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**Fig No.04, Evidence of Indus Basketry after Excavation,**



**Source: Harappa.com**

Fig No.05, Media Coverage of Public Reaction against Any Project on Indus River Which Can Hamper Water to Lower Riparian



Source: Google.Com

Fig No.05, Media Coverage of public reaction against any project on Indus River which can hamper water to lower riparian.

Indus River is approximately 3180 km long, hundreds of towns and cities were established on his both banks during Indus period, Indus River and Ghaghar Hakra a tributary of Ganga Yamuna river played a key role in making Indus civilization one of flourished and advance civilization of ancient world. Till today Indus River is considered lifeline of around 251.3 million peoples of Pakistan, climate has drastically effected the water flow of Indus River which oftenly brought demographic changes & regional destabilization. Recognition of right for water of lower riparian is fine example of community led heritage management, Indus river is a well preserved live heritage.

Fig No.06, Brick of Mohen Jo Daro and Modern Brick Making in Sindh



Indus brick one of the building material of great civilization, before mature Indus period mud bricks were in use, burnt bricks were largely used during mature Indus period up to 1800 BC, Indus bricks makers made various size bricks, the brick used at Mohen jo Daro had size of 28 cm in length, 14 cm in width and 7 cm thickness maintaining the

ratio 1:2:4 (Possehl 2002; Datta 2001). Till today the same size ratio of 1:2:4 for modern brick making is followed, though the continued standard brick ratio is one intergenerational example of community led heritage management.

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**Fig No.07, Masjid and Mandir at Karonjhar,**



Source: google.com

Karonjhar 21 km long mountain range is located in district Tharparkar, Karonjhar Mountains are rich in precious minerals, situates the shared religious spaces with rationality, Masjid and Mandir together is collective outcome of religious pluralism. This heritage is endangered and circled around by mining companies. Local communities including Muslims and non-Muslims stood unitedly

at every front with firm determination to safeguard their heritage. Local community filled a petition in 2010 to stop mining, Sindh High Court issued a stay order to halting mining in 2019, in 2021 a committee was constituted to determine its cultural significance. Senate of Pakistan passed a resolution in 2023 declaring Karonjhar as heritage, in 2024 situation got more worsened when government kept insisted to continue mining at any cost but unfearing firm deterrence from culturally motivated communities to safe guard their heritage at any cost has saved Karonjhar for upto now that is one vigilant, applauded example of community led heritage management.

### **Challenges**

Community led heritage management in Pakistan face multiple challenges and constraints, despite having community potentials, communities at all have meager legal support, lacking technical capacity, scarcity or no funding and authoritative control between local stake holders and institutional professionals. Sometimes economic interest within local communities retard community management endeavors. Furthermore heritage experts raise concerns over scientific approaches and conservation ethics lacking within communities, institutional conducive role is indispensable for capacity building measures for balancing professional expertise with social inclusion.

### **DISCUSSION**

Studies shows that community led heritage management provide much effective, reliable and ethically best substitute to formal conventional managerial practices applied for heritage management in Pakistan. Furthermore when it is lined up with UNESCO and ICOMOS guidelines, resulting much extended sustainability, cultural relevancy and accountability. While dealing with heritage collaboratively institutional professional, archaeologists, conservationists must make transition from sole authorities as a role of facilitator, collaborator, developing trust for shared responsibility this shift will strengthen the social authenticity of archaeological practice and acceptance.

### **CONCLUSION**

Community led heritage management delineates transformative perspectives inside contemporary archaeology, especially in Pakistan where heritage is seen through socially driven context. Empowering the surrounding communities in dealing with heritage can bring more responsive, sustainable, ethical, social acceptance and collaborative heritage governance. Under the guidelines of UNESCO and ICOMOS this research paper calls for formal acceptance of community role of custodianship, reframing the collaborative role of communities into National level policies and legislation, redefining the institutional professional role for protecting heritage ensuring inclusive cultural rights, indigenous knowledge uphold by communities.

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