

Evolution of Terracotta Female Forms from Ropar (from c. 200 BC to AD 600)

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ABSTRACT

The archaeological site of Ropar in Punjab has yielded evidence of six cultural periods, from the Harappan to the medieval period. This paper deals with the study of the evolution of the female form as revealed in excavations from Periods III and IV, as these are the two periods that yielded female figurines, through which their evolution may be traced. These figurines of female forms indicate a gradual evolution from the simple half-mould half-modelled variety to highly advanced, moulded terracotta forms, the most outstanding of which is a *vīṇā* player of the Gupta era. Indeed, the site of Ropar may be considered a nucleus for the study of terracotta art across Punjab.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ropar is an important archaeological site in Punjab excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India from 1952 to 1955 (*IAR* 1953-54, 1954-55; Sharma 1981: 17-24). It was here that the remains of the Harappan civilization were noticed for the first time in India, after Independence. Situated close to Chandigarh in Rupnagar district, on the left bank of river Sutlej, the site also revealed the superimposition of Painted Grey Ware (PGW). The main mound is 21 m high (Pl. 56A), and excavations here have yielded six cultural periods beginning from the Harappan to the medieval period (Ghosh 1989: 377-381).

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