

**F. Khan, J.R. Knox, K.D. Thomas, C.A. Petrie and J.C. Morris,
*Sheri Khan Tarakai and Early Village Life in the Borderlands of
 North-West Pakistan***

Sheri Khan Tarakai and Early Life in the Borderlands of North-West Pakistan by F. Khan, J.R. Knox, K.D. Thomas, C.A. Petrie and J.C. Morris is an outstanding contribution of the *Bannu Archaeological Project* (hereafter BAP) initiated by the British Museum and Institute of Archaeology, University College London; Bryn Mawr College and the University of Cambridge, UK initially with the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar and subsequently with Pakistan Heritage Society (PHS) that jointly carried out archaeological research in the Bannu Basin between 1985 and 2001. The book containing 13 chapters, 464 pages, 279 figures (of antiquity, drawings, sections, colour and black & white photographs), is published in 2010 by Oxbow Books, Oxford under ISBN 978-1-84217-391-1.

This volume is in fact the third one on the archaeology of the Bannu Basin after the *Lewan and the Bannu Basin* (Allchin et al 1986) and *Explorations and Excavations in Bannu District, North-West Frontier Province, Pakistan, 1985-1988* (Khan et al 1991). It is, however, a comprehensive work on investigating the late Neolithic and early Chalcolithic settlements in southern part of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan with emphasis on Sheri Khan Tarakai in the Tochi Valley. The monograph presents a meticulous description in a systematic and logical manner on the stratigraphy, architecture, pottery, lithic assemblage, floral and faunal remains, terra-cottas and other small finds unearthed at Sheri Khan Tarakai during different field operations. Not only the viewers of this monograph find an insight into the socio-economic life of the people of Sheri Khan Tarakai but also get a clear image of the way of life in the borderlands of North-West Pakistan in the 5th millennium BC. Analysis of the identical material from Girdai, Barai Khaurra I and Ter Kala Dheri in the Bannu, and Jhandi Babar I and Gulgai Kot I on the Gomal Plain have also been made to understand the prevailing settlement and subsistence systems. Likewise, its relationship with numerous sites and cultures in the adjacent region of Baluchistan, Punjab, Kashmir and India has also been discussed thoroughly. Sheri Khan Tarakai presented a unique and unmatched ceramic tradition and human terra-cotta figurines. The pottery is hand built with bowls and jars as two main types, depicted with simple and complex geometric designs like hatched crosses, hatched triangles, diamonds, bands, pendent, and birds (cranes) and goats. The majority of the human t/c figurines belong to female, which have been modeled in seated form with pronounced buttocks and appliqué breasts. They are sometimes depicted with black lines around the waist or head, which suggests respectively the arrangement of the cloths and hairstyles.

In the monograph, the physical and human geography of both the Tochi and Gomal regions have been assessed and presented elegantly by using digital maps from GIS, which helps understanding the pattern of settlements. While drawing final conclusion of this single period site, it was aptly contextualized on the basis of findings, which was supported by the radiocarbon dates from Sheri Khan Tarakai and identical material recovered from Jhandi Babar I and Gulgai Kot I. While commenting in section 13.4, page 418, the authors suspect the existence of a transition between the *Sheri Khan Tarakai* and the *Tochi-Gomal* cultural phases in the borderland region but the commentary is missing unfortunately.

(Muhammad Farooq Swati and Zakirullah Jan)