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EXCAVATIONS AT LANGHNAJ : 1944-63

PART II

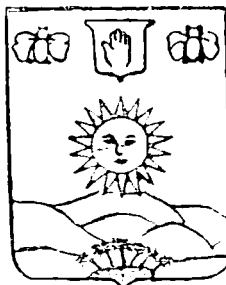
THE FAUNA

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THE SITES

Langhnaj ($72^{\circ}32' \text{ N}$ and $23^{\circ}27' \text{ E}$), Akhaj ($72^{\circ}31' \text{ N}$ and $23^{\circ}28' \text{ E}$) Valasna and scores of other sites in Northern Gujarat are situated on the junction of the alluvial coastal strip formed by the encroachment of the shallow gulf of Cambay and the detrital deposits brought down by the many rivers, which drain the State of Gujarat, the western parts of Malwa, and the southeastern parts of Rajasthan. The upward slope of the alluvial strip from the seaboard eastward is very gentle, so that except where the wind-borne accumulations of loam, or loess (sandy silt) make small local hillocks here and there, the face of the country is dead flat. Only as we advance eastwards that the plain is broken by low hills, which rise up at intervals.

Thus the country from Baroda in the south upto the village of Virpur (now gone) in the north constituted by the present districts of Baroda, Kaira, Ahmedabad and Mehsana is simply a flat alluvial plain, unrelieved by any hill. Stretches and stretches of loam (properly wind-borne sandy silt) cover miles on end and the ancient river alluvium (gravel and silt). At places the former look like hillocks with a height varying from 20 ft. to 100 ft.; wherever the river or its tributaries have cut through these alluvial and eolian deposits deep, canyon-like gullies or *nalas*, locally *kotars*, have been formed.

Another striking feature of the topography must be mentioned. There are what FOOTE called ' inundation lakes ' formed between two or more loessic hillocks during the monsoon. They retain some water until March-April, but almost completely dry up. During the winter, however they are an important source of water to the villagers, and beasts and birds, particularly the latter, among whom the long-necked, thin legged *sarasas*, with their graceful, aeroplane-like descent on the waters, have left and indelible impression on those who have had the opportunity to behold the scene.

Langhnaj is situated at a distance of 59 km. from Ahmedabad, almost to its due north. It is a railway station on the Kalol-Vijapur Ambliyan branch line on Western Railway. Akhaj lies to the north-west of Langhnaj at a distance of about 6 km.

Valasna is the northern-most site on the edge of the Aravalli foothills. The nearest railway station is Vadnagar on the Mehsana-Taranga Hill.

None of these sites was known to Bruce Foote. The first two were discovered by the First Gujarat Expedition in 1941-42 and the last in 1947. Langhnaj was initially selected in 1941 as a base from which explorations could be conducted, it having an excellent Rest House. However, it was soon found that Langhnaj itself was a very promising field for detailed investigation. Not only microliths were noticed as soon as we stepped out of the railway station, but it had a large mound on the west, now cut by the road from the railway station and partly occupied by the Rest house (or Traveller's Bungalow) and another, exactly opposite to the former, that is in the east, but across the small inundation lake. The former mound is called *Ravalia-no-timbo* (because Ravalia, a semi-untouchable caste buried their dead here), while the latter was completely uninhabited, and was called *Andhario-timbo* (since a thick brushwood had made it darkish and impenetrable).

Akhaj has similar topographical features having a group of mounds to its north, south-east and south-west, and a small lake at the foot of the hillock to the southwest.

Excavations

In the initial excavations, two pits, (6 ft. \times 4 ft.) were dug on the western side of the Andhario mound (then called Mound II). Later, in February 1944, a trench divided into three sections, was laid east-west across the topmost flat surface of the mound after clearing the brushwood. This was later extended. Larger trenches called ' Rectangles ' (to distinguish them from the earlier small trenches) were laid beside this trench in December-January 1944-45, and some smaller trenches on the periphery of the mound and its foot near the lake. With a view to finding the pitlines of the buried skeletons, it was necessary to find them, as far as possible, partly in the section and partly in the plan, and digging done by alternate squares. A large square in the form of a grid was necessitated in 1946-47. This was placed adjoining the rectangles of 1945 and partially dug. The small cuttings of 1954 and 1959 were dug by the late Dr. SUBBARAO.

In 1963 eight trenches were excavated, in the area east of the above-mentioned trenches, four on the (near) crest of the mound and four on the slope to the north-west and south-west. The main trench on the crest was eight meters in size, others two meters square, except the one

on the north-western slope which was two by four meters in size. Excavation proceeded by a system of 'sub-squares', each one meter square for the levels of a given trench. In six trenches out of eight digging was stopped at 10 ft. 3.5 metre depth, but in the two trenches in the slope, it was continued only to depths of three (above 10 cm.) and six feet (182 cm.) respectively. (KARVE-CORVINUS and KENNEDY, 1963-64, pp. 51-52).

Thus between 1942 and 1963, a greater portion of the area included within the 222-224 ft. contour has been excavated. This approximately covers an area of 128,00 sq. ft. Of course, the area to the north-east and south-west yet remains undug and if the experience of 1963 is any guide, it should still contain some kitchen middens as well as human skeletons which were buried within them. For there is little doubt now that the top of the present mound, as well as its slopes some 100 ft. downwards, between 220 and 222 ft. contour, were occupied by the microlithic man. The mound was both a habitation-cum-cemetery.

FAUNA

(Table No. 1 Continued)

Canis familiaris (pariah dog)

Number	Length U.P4 mms.	Width U.P4 mms.	Length U.M1 mms.	Width U.M1 mms.	Length L.M1 mms.	Width L.M1 mms.	Length L.M2 mms.	Width L.M2 mms.	Depth under P4 mms.
166D.	17.3	8.2	11.0	14.1	—	—	—	—	—
166. WW	19.4	9.9	13.0	14.0	20.7	8.2	9.0	7.0	21.0
166. B	18.0	9.0	12.5	14.0	21.0	8.6	9.0	6.5	20.0
166. P	19.9	10.2	12.1	17.3	21.7	8.5	9.0	6.9	21.1
166. DDD	19.0	9.9	13.2	16.9	21.6	8.9	8.2	7.0	19.2
166. C	18.0	10.5	12.9	16.4	22.4	8.2	8.4	6.0	20.5
Mean	18.60	9.62	12.45	16.45	21.48	8.48	8.72	6.68	20.36
Range	17.3 —19.4	8.2 —10.5	11.0 —13.2	14.0 —17.3	20.7 —22.4	8.2 —8.9	8.2 —9.0	6.0 —7.0	20.0 —21.1
Langhnaj Specimen	19.9	11.0	14.0	17.5	22.0	9.7	9.6	8.5	23.5

HERPESTS EDWARDSI CF. FERRUGINEUS BLANFORDS, 1874

An almost complete skull and skeleton of a mongoose was found in the occupation level. The completeness of the remains suggests that the animal died in a burrow, so it may be intrusive and not contemporary with the microlithic habitation of the site.

The features of identification of the Indian species of mongoose in relation to the skeleton found at Langhnaj have been described by CLUTTON-BROCK (1962).

ORDER PERISSODACTYLA

Rhinoceros unicornis L

The remains of rhinoceros consisted of a left scapula, a right humerus, a talus, and a fragment of molar tooth. Another scapula was found, after it had been cleaned and mended, to have been used by prehistoric man as an anvil for the production of microliths. A description of this specimen was published by ZEUNER (1952) and the bone is now in the possession of the Deccan College at Poona.¹ The scapulae of the three

¹ See Part I, Pl. XIII.

LANGHNAJ

species of rhinoceros that are found in Asia at the present day are easily identified by their shape and size. Measurements of scapulae from the British Museum (Nat. Hist.) are given in the following table to compare with the one from Langhnaj, number 4867.

Number	Species	Scapula Length mms.	Width of the neck mms.	Length of glen- oid cavity mms.	Width of glenoid cavity mms.
1950.	.				
10.18.5	<i>R. unicornis</i>	513.00	133.5	94.8	92.0
723d	<i>R. sondaicus.</i>	392.0	116.4	82.5	75.4
1949					
1.11.1	<i>D. sumatrensis</i>	364.0	81.5	76.8	52.5
4867	Langhnaj				
	<i>R. unicornis</i>	—	128.6	102.6	89.8

There is no difficulty in ascribing the two scapulae from Langhnaj to the species *R. unicornis* and the talus also is identical in size and shape with the British Museum specimens of this species. The fragment of molar tooth is too broken to be able to be specifically identified, as is the humerus shaft.

The features of identification and systematics of living and fossil species of rhinoceroses in Asia have been fully described by HOOIJER (1946).

Rhinoceros unicornis is the only species that would be likely to be found in Gujarat. It was previously common in grassy jungle and swampy ground throughout the Peninsula of India but it is now becoming much rarer and is confined to the Assam Plain and Nepal.

Rhinoceros sondaicus, the lesser one-horned rhinoceros is restricted to Burma, the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Java and Borneo. It has not been found on archaeological sites in Western India, and neither has the species, *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis* which is now very rare, and found also in Burma, Sumatra, and Borneo. This is the smallest of living rhinoceroses and the most hairy; it is the only surviving member of the genus *Dicerorhinus* that was represented by at least three species in the Pleistocene of Europe.