

ISSN 1023-0688

ANCIENT SINDH

ANNUAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH

VOLUME 5 – 1998-1999



PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY - FACULTY OF NATURAL SCIENCES
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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF THARI IN THE THAR DESERT (SINDH, PAKISTAN)

ABSTRACT - During the survey carried out northeast of the town of Thari in the Thar Desert, many sites were discovered on the surface of the sand dunes that surround the salt-water basins of Ganero and Jamal Shah Sim. Most of these sites consist of flint scatters among which are geometric microliths of different shape and dimension. Some of them can be attributed to the Mesolithic, while others are probably older and might belong to the end of the Late Palaeolithic. Some other sites, which yielded typical painted potsherds, belong to the Kot Diji Culture. This preliminary survey has revealed the great archaeological potential of the salt-water lake area of Thari, where hundred of sites are still to be discovered.

PREFACE

The scope of this paper is to illustrate and discuss the finds from the archaeological sites discovered during the survey carried out in January 2001 by the "Joint Rohri Hills Project" in the salt lake region north east of the town of Thari, in the Thari District of Upper Sindh.

Until a few years ago little was known of the archaeology of the Thar Desert around Thari. The most important discoveries had so far been reported in the PhD Thesis of Professor G.M. SHAR (1995), while almost nothing was known of the Early Holocene prehistory of the area from which only a few Mesolithic sites were discovered during the last years of research (BIAGI and KAZI, 1995; SHAR *et al.*, 1996). The scarcity of Mesolithic sites in the Thari desert region greatly contrasted with what was known for the neighbouring Rajasthan where sites of this period are well documented (MISRA, 1977; 1985).

THE 2001 SURVEY

A brief reconnaissance survey was carried out between January 31st and February 4th, around the salt-water basins of Ganero and Jamal Shah Sim. During this week, 16 new archaeological sites were discovered and 3 others, already found during the previous season,

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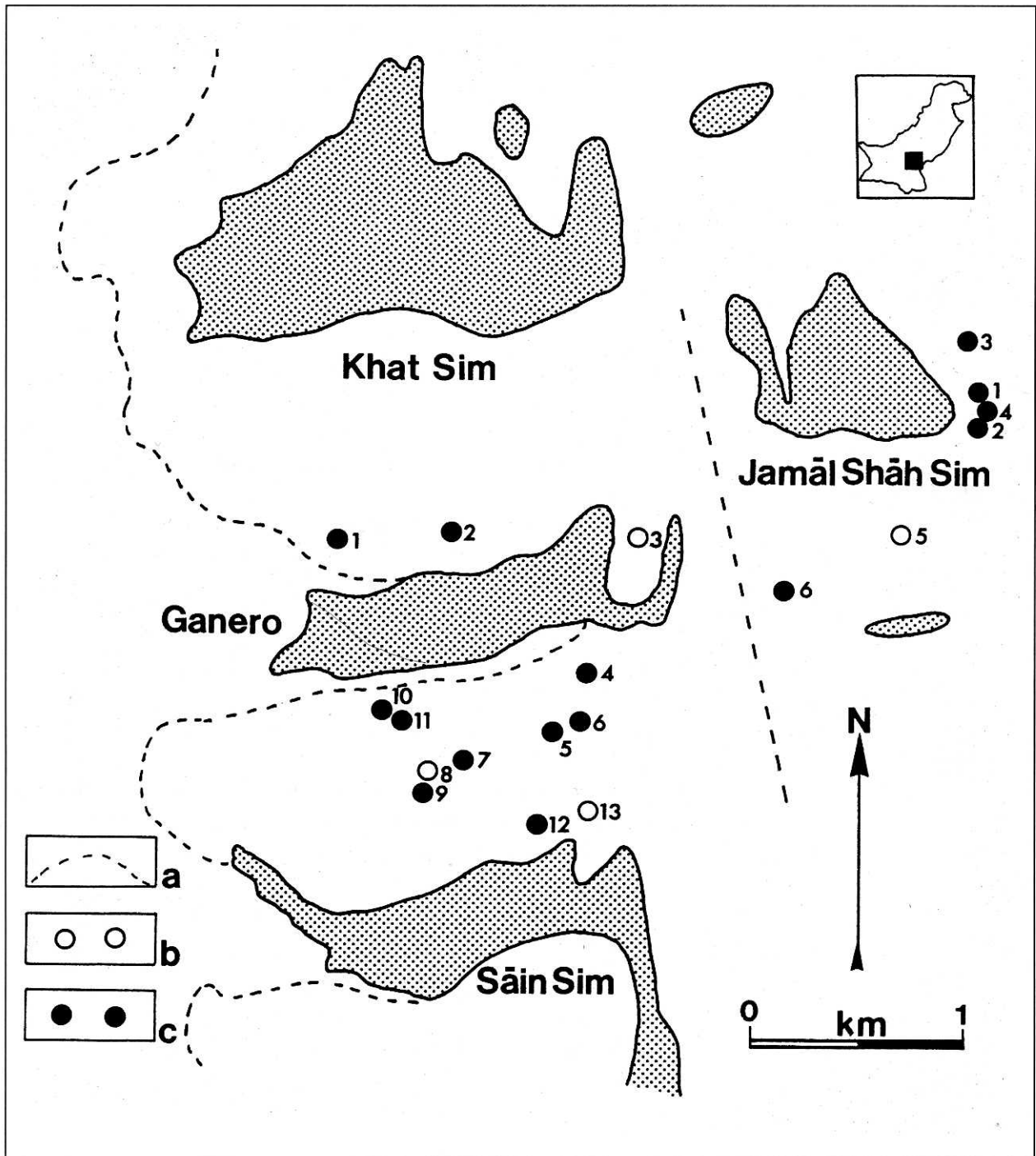


Fig. 1 - Distribution map of the archaeological sites discovered during the 2001 survey. The JS sites are to the right of the hatched line and the GNR ones to the left. a) limit of the Thar Desert dunes, b) Kot Dijji and later sites, c) Late Palaeolithic/Mesolithic sites (*drawing by P. Biagi*).

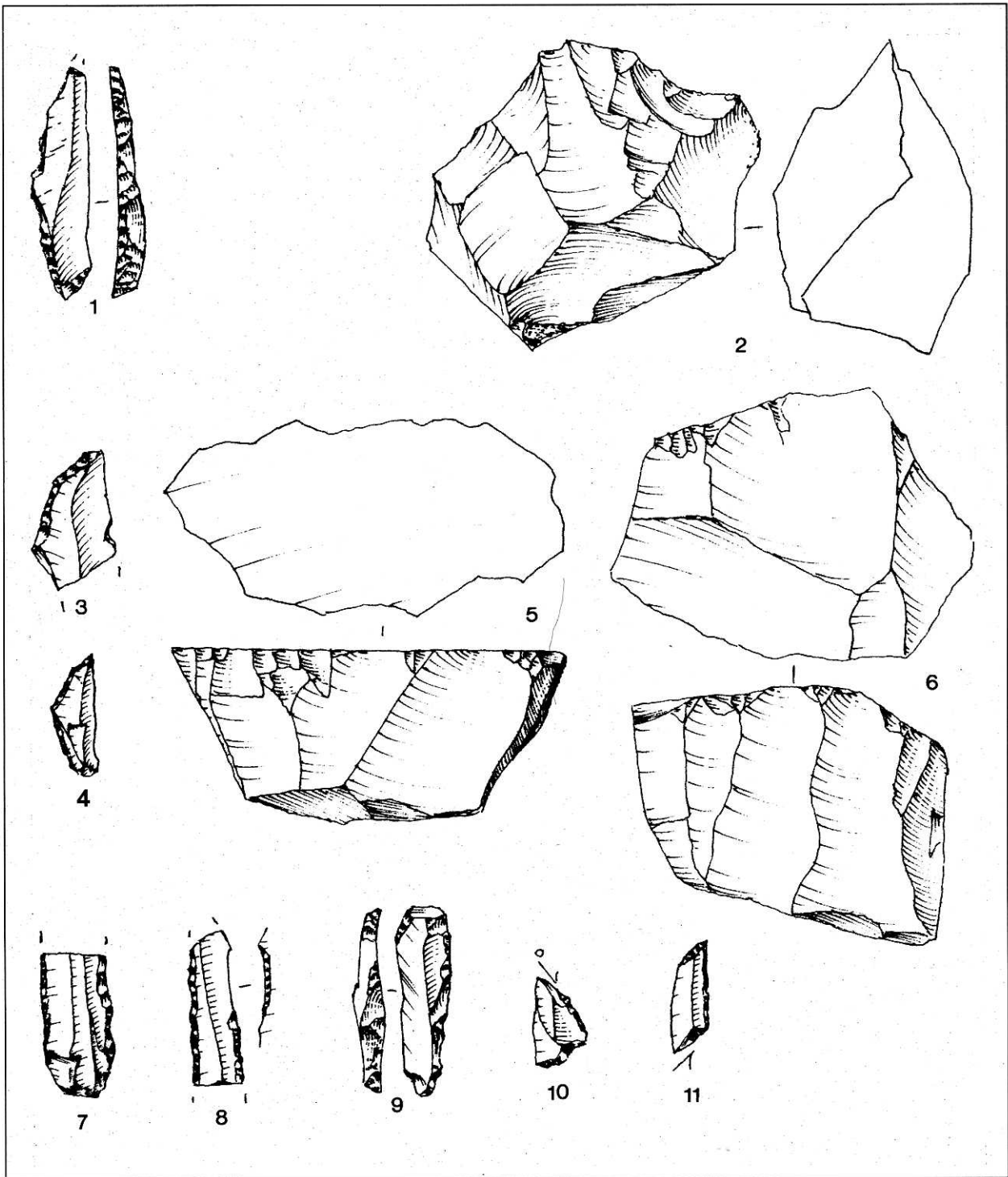


Fig. 2 - Flint tools and cores from GNR1 (1 and 2), GNR2 (3-5), GNR7 (6-8) and GNR10 (9-11) (1:1) (drawings by G. Almerigogna).

