

Baluchistan and the Indus Civilization

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Fig. 12.1
Mohenjo Daro,
aerial view
of the citadel

The present chapters have shown that the culture complexes that formed about the early 3rd millennium BCE in Baluchistan and in Sindh represented an advanced phase in the genesis of cultural, social and economic development. The threshold that separates these communities from the transition to civilization has become lower in the past few years, yet it still exists, although in a distinct form (Fig. 12.1). In his extensive review of the developments during the Early Harappan Phase,

G. L. Possehl² arrives at the conclusion that “...by looking at all of the data from the Early Harappan Stage it can be seen how weakly developed it is as a threshold to the Mature Harappan. There seems to have been a minimum of development of social differentiation, craft and career specialization, and little evolution of the political and ideological institutions that produce public architecture. These socio-cultural features stand in marked contrast to levels of development inferred for the Mature Harappan and must be used to shape perceptions of the nature of Mature Harappan society, its

¹ The chapters on Nausharo and Nindowari were written by E. Cortesi. We would like to express our gratitude to our French Colleagues, particularly A. Didier, for providing the images.

² Possehl 1999, 724.



Fig. 12.2
Aerial image of
the Great Bath at
Mohenjo Daro



Fig. 12.3
Mohenjo Daro,
view across the
buildings



Fig. 12.4
Indus seal from
Kinneru, Ornach



Fig. 12.5
Mohenjo Daro,
a lane among houses

institutions and the historical developmental process that took it from the Early Harappan Stage to urbanization.”

Although this is not a generally accepted view and the data can be weighed differently, rather stressing the continuity obvious in many aspects, e.g. technology, crafts, and styles, as well as the presence of urbanism, the beginning of writing and administration already prior to the Indus Civilization, the transition to a complex civilization has, in essence, remained enigmatic (Figs. 12.2–4). Its major hallmarks, the wide distribution of fundamental cultural markers and 'administrative and/or social tools', such as seals and prestige items, paired with a mass production of the former as well as directed far-distance trade with the Mesopotamian polities and early states and the copper-rich Oman Peninsula, imply a previously not attested social and economic complexity and organisation.³

Without doubt, the continuation of previously developed capabilities is unquestioned, yet, many techniques developed further after 2600 BCE and were improved and stylistically re-formed. These changes render the material culture its typifying character. The spheres of city-building, architecture, economy and trade with the necessary infrastructure experience a similar expanding development: the inventory multiplies and evidences

³ There is an enormous amount of literature on these issues, which cannot be acknowledged here. The most important synopses are Kenoyer 1998; Possehl 1999; Wright 2010.

a phase of enormous economic and artistic creation (Fig. 12.5). Tradition remains, and nevertheless there is seldom the question as to which period of time objects should be dated. The results of this creativity are constant and unmistakably Harappan as far as the above-named markers are concerned, although within the wide region of this extent the prevailing local traditions continue as well, leading to the formulation of regional styles within the Indus Civilization.

In any case, the core region where this transformation ultimately took place was not Baluchistan, but Punjab and Sindh, the open plain with abundant water and few topographical barriers.

As far as southeastern Baluchistan is concerned, the scope of 'organized' structure and the dimension of interaction in the Early Harappan Period was far less than during the Indus Period. More importantly, most of the sites lack temporal depth, as described in Chapter 8, were only shortly occupied and abandoned at the end of the Early Harappan Phase, which is

Fig. 12.6a
Kulli Pot
from Harambo
near Nal



Fig. 12.6b
Kulli Ware
from Harambo



Fig. 12.7
Kulli vessels,
cat. nos.
733, 717, 724



about 2600 BCE. Although settled life was not altogether given up, settlement continuity is low since sites reflecting the appearance of new cultural styles, such as the Kulli, are rather new foundations (Figs. 12.6a,b; 7). This pattern is not only observed as far as beyond Quetta, but also e.g. in the Kachhi Plain, where after a short, though crucial period of coexistence, Mehrgarh was abandoned and Nausharo expanded. Also Cholistan may be mentioned, where a massive shift of settlements was noted, accompanied by a functional differentiation of sites at the beginning of the Harappan Period. Even if this shift can be traced to changes in river systems⁴, this would not explain the increase of and simultaneous functional specialisation among the sites.

The Kulli Complex developed around 2600 BCE as one of the above-mentioned regional styles in southern Baluchistan, first attested by Sir A. Stein during his surveys in Gedrosia. Later discoveries and excavations have facilitated its better understanding within the cultural setting and temporal frame (Figs. 12.8–12). A renewed approach and interpretation of this evidence, devoted primarily to the excavations of the French Missions at Nindowari, but incorporating the results of their work in Makran and at Nausharo, is the most comprehensive compilation of this topic.⁵

In some areas, in the later 3rd millennium BCE the Kulli assemblages are marked by a strong Harappan 'touch', which reflects the westerly expansion of this civilisation and its merging with local traditions around 2400 BCE. A small number of sites, however, display more pronounced Indus features and are seen as 'outposts' of the Indus Civilization. Among these are apart from Sutkagen Dor and Sutka Koh, Miri Qalat in Makran⁶, Balakot and Bakkar Buthi in Las Bela, Shortughai in Afghanistan, and Nausharo in the Kachhi Plain as the most intensively investigated one.

4 Mughal 1990.
5 Jarrige et al. 2011a.
6 See Chapter 11.



Fig. 12.8
Cat. no. 721,
Kulli pot



Fig. 12.9
Cat. no. 730,
detail of bull design

Fig. 12.10
Cat. no. 726,
detail of the bull design



Fig. 12.11
Kulli beaker with
bichrome decoration

Fig. 12.12
Cat. no. 749,
cylindrical
perforated jar

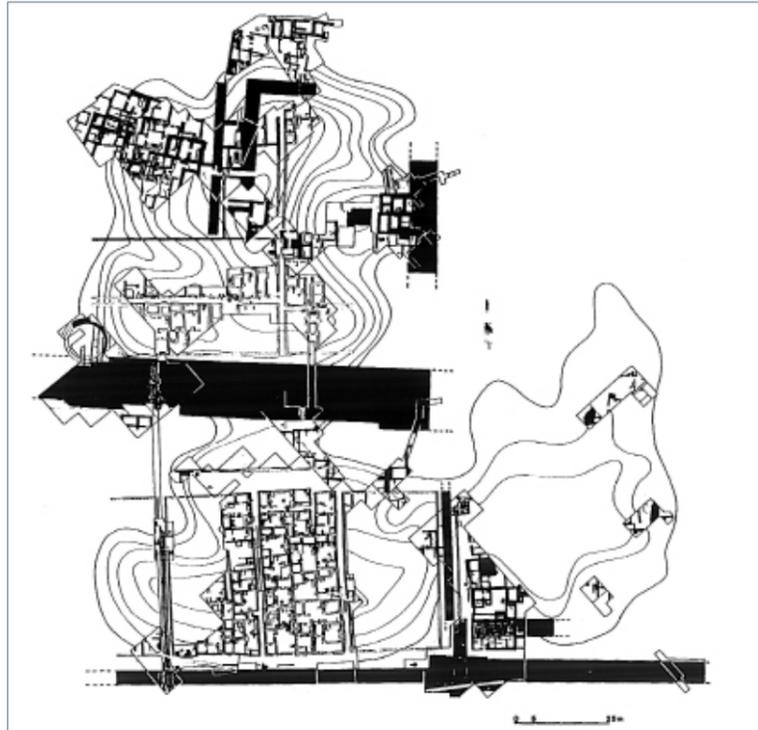


Fig. 12.13
Nausharo,
Plan with excavated
areas

Fig. 12.14
Figurines from
Period IB, the left
with yellow pigment



Fig. 12.15
House with niches,
fireplace and pottery
on the floor, Period IC

Nausharo

The site of Nausharo is located 6 km near Mehrgarh (see Fig. 4.7). The excavations at the site, which started in 1985 and lasted until 1996, were headed by J. -F. Jarrige, director of the French Mission to Pakistan (Fig. 12.13).⁷

Their excavations began with the purpose to uncover the urban settlement of the Mature Indus Phase in the Kachhi Plain and to understand its relation to the cultural complex of Mehrgarh VII. This period



is present also at the kiln site of Lal Shah, where the material resembles shapes of the late Kot Dijian and Amri IIB phases; along with this assemblage many forms can be considered proto-Harappan. Since this material appears in combination with late Quetta Ware and bracket designs, this phase is considered transitional with several shapes and paintings which were further developed by the Mature Indus Civilization.

On the basis of a detailed study of the pottery sequence, Nausharo was dated from 2900 to 1900 BCE, subdivided into seven periods, IA–D to IV. Moreover three ¹⁴C datings from Nausharo IB–C are available⁸:

NS IB cal BC 2865-2498 / BP 4070 +/-70

NS IC cal BC 2855-2470 / BP 4030 +/-70

NS IC cal BC 2853-2463 / BP 4010 +/-80

Nausharo Period IA–C, 2900–2600 BCE

As far as the ceramic assemblage is concerned, a certain continuity could be attested, as confirmed also by finds from Mehrgarh VIIc.⁹ These occupational layers represent the final stage of



Fig. 12.16
Typical jars
with bull in
landscape, Period ID

Mehrgarh.¹⁰ Moreover, several proto-Indus shapes were found in connection with pottery of the late Quetta/Mehrgarh tradition at Nausharo, Period I, and Lal Shah. The layers with parallels to Mehrgarh VIIC were sealed by the Harappan deposits.

Many female and animal figurines could be recorded: the anthropomorphic artefacts are clad with bangles and show a distinct corpulent body with the hand raised to the mouth.¹¹ However, more similar types to those which developed at Mehrgarh are also present (Fig. 12.14).¹²

The impressive architectural remains comprise buttressed walls and a large platform built from mud bricks, an architectural feature attached directly to the upper parts of the buildings.

Therefore, the settlement in this period must have extended quite far along the north-west axis of the mound (Fig. 12.15).

During Period I, the settlement occupied the northern part of the site. Later, in Period II–III, it was shifted to the south, where no remains of this earlier Period I could be found. This evidence allows formulating the idea that the early phase of the

Indus occupation, Nausharo Period II, might have begun in a previously not occupied part of the site.

The transitional stage to the Indus Civilization is represented by the Period ID phase (2600–2500 BCE). Particular noteworthy for this phase are the remains of a mud brick structure, which was destroyed by fire.¹³ Many vessels were recovered from the rooms of this building, forming an important ceramic assemblage, which permits a more detailed view on this transitional stage (Fig. 12.16). The decorative motifs are often applied onto buff or red-painted vessels and show geometric patterns ranging from intersected circle to cross-hatched designs. The inner parts of several painted dishes found on the floors of the same building are grooved and impressed with designs similar to those found later in the Harappan levels.

Nausharo Period II, 2500–2300 BCE

The evidence related to this period confirms the assumption of an advanced urbanism, already with typical Indus features: a lower city and an acropolis with monumental architecture, showing

⁷ Jarrige 1986; 1989; 1990.

⁸ Jarrige et al. 2011b, Tab. 1

⁹ Jarrige 1986, 89.

¹⁰ Quivron 2000, 147.

¹¹ Jarrige 1986, Fig. 25,A.

¹² Jarrige 2009, 163.

¹³ Jarrige 1989, 32.