

CHAPTER 8

SOUTH ASIA: TRANSFORMATIONS AND CONTINUITIES (c. 1900–1200 BCE)

INTRODUCTION

As discussed in Chapter 7, many of the archaeological pioneers were convinced that there were major social, cultural and economic discontinuities and transformations associated with the disappearance of the cities of the Indus Valley Tradition and their inhabitants at the end of the Integrated Era. Indeed, Mortimer Wheeler was certain that there was “a notable absence of any real continuity in the Indus Valley between the great Civilisation and its beggarly successors” (Wheeler 1966: 94) and that this was a period characterised by “insecurity and economic instability”, invasions and mass human migrations (Wheeler 1966: 96). It is important to note that this belief in the lack of continuity between the Indus and later developments was not limited to European or North American scholars, as illustrated by Sankalia’s later observation that “India was once more turned into a country of villages and small towns, where writing and reading seem to have been unknown” (1977: 98). D. P. Agrawal also commented that, in comparison to the Indus cities, “[t]he Chalcolithic cultures present a definite set-back in every sphere” (1971: 231) and B. B. Lal famously referred to this period as a “Dark Age” (Lal 1955: 6). This apparent decline, however, had to be explained against a backdrop in which it became increasingly clear that most regions of South Asia were home to numerous progressively complex communities during the first half of the second millennium BCE following the disappearance of the Indus cities (Figure 8.1) (Timeline 8.1). This population and settlement growth was referred to as “colonisation” by Sankalia (1977: 99), who also attempted to link the various ‘Chalcolithic’ cultures of India with the mass movement of Aryans into South Asia (Sankalia 1974: 558). Far from being isolated in pursuing this explanation, the model was also followed by Agrawal who linked the Ahar-Banas culture of Rajasthan with Aryan migrants (Agrawal 1971: 240). Others, too, continued to follow Wheeler’s approach of trying to map the postulated movement of Aryans against the archaeological record, including Fairservis (1971) and Stacul (1969). More surprising were the subsequent attempts by Allchin in 1995, Parpola in

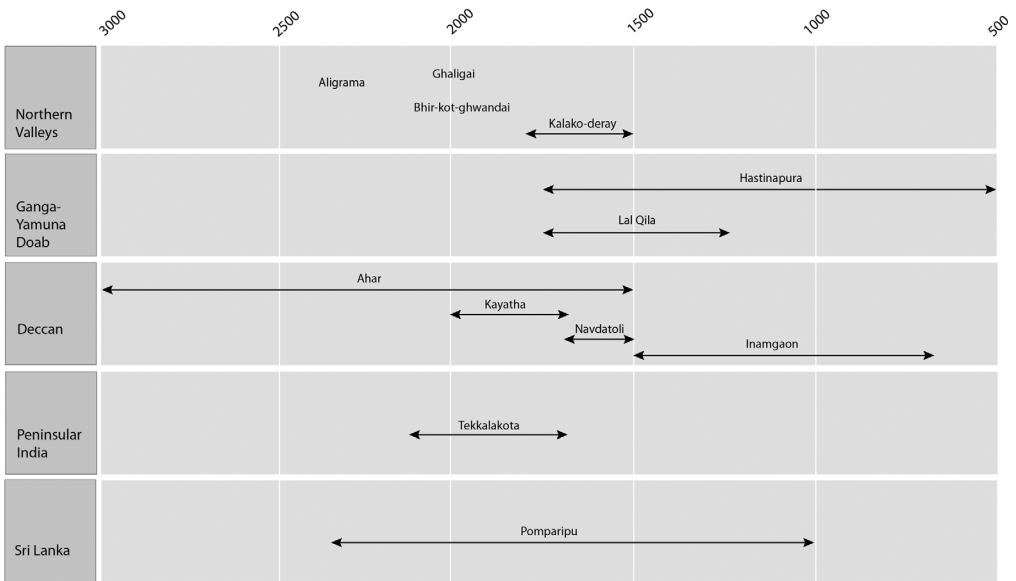


Figure 8.1. Map of sites mentioned in Chapter 8.

1994 and Kulke and Rothermund in 1990 to attribute change to incoming Aryans, particularly as a number of scholars were already stressing the presence of a distinct continuity between the two urban-focused developments. This apparent contradiction is now resolving itself with increasing consensus that the period between the two traditions was not a discontinuity but a period of steady development (Sengupta and Chakraborty 2008; Agrawal 2007; Shaffer 1993; Coningham 1995a; Kenoyer 1991b).

Despite the added value of the new archaeological evidence from the northern valleys of Pakistan, Baluchistan and the regions that we cover in this chapter, the abandonment of the urban centres by their populations and their abandonment of script is still undeniable. Indeed, whilst attempts have been made by scholars to trace individual Indus signs through the 'Chalcolithic' into

South Asia: Discontinuity or Continuity?



Timeline 8.1. Timeline for Chapter 8.

the Iron Age (Lal 1960), the results remain questionable. In place of the loss of a uniform script, there was instead the adoption of non-scriptural graffiti inscribed on ceramics and some metal objects within the Ganga basin and in Maharashtra to the south, as well as the presence of terracotta seals and sealings at Pirak. These examples did not represent a shared script but they did represent an incipient demand for a system of individual ownership, perhaps paralleling the long use of such mechanisms during the earlier Regionalisation Era in Baluchistan (Coningham 2002). Spencer suggested that advanced tools of bureaucracy enabled early emergent polities to undertake periods of relatively rapid territorial expansion (2010: 7119). Whilst not entirely applicable, it may still be assumed that the technical developments of seals and graffiti expanded the geographical reach and influence of the leaders of these emergent communities.

Similarly, the major cities and highly specialised settlements, such as Kuntasi, were also lost from the archaeological record and the population estimates for Indus cities dwarf those for the ‘Chalcolithic’ settlements. For example, the lower town of Mohenjo-daro on its own may have housed as many as 40,000 people (Fairservis 1967), but the population of Daimabad would have been no more than 6,000 (Dhavalikar et al. 1988: 1001). While the construction of enclosing ramparts and ditches may have engaged substantial elements of the population of ‘Chalcolithic’ settlements in communal activity, they by no means compared with the scale of investment of surplus, technical knowledge and organisation needed to design and manufacture the walls surrounding

the populations of Kalibangan or Harappa, despite Sharma's suggestions that the early defences at Kausambi closely resemble those of Harappa (Sharma 1960: 6). The patterns of uniformity and lack of prestigious burials as recorded by both Miller (1985) and Rissman (1988) during the Integration Era were also transformed, and intramural hoarding was replaced with richly furnished individual graves as in north-west Pakistan (Box 8.1). Perhaps also linked with the rich deposits of copper objects within the Ganga-Yamuna Doab

Box 8.1. The Gandharan Grave Culture

The Gandharan Grave Culture (GGC) of the northern valleys of Swat and Dir has attracted considerable interest within South Asian archaeology, largely because it seemed to offer an insight into what was happening between the two major urban-focused periods, the Integrated Eras of the Indus and the Early Historic Traditions, and also because it was a rural phenomenon rather than an urban one. The GGC offers a good case study of how different archaeologists, or in this case, different archaeological projects from different countries with different research paradigms, can reach rather different interpretations; and also how ongoing research utilising new methodologies can produce new data which can also change interpretations.

What theories have been developed to explain what was happening in these Northern Valleys? Not only within the graves but within the occupation sites too and across what is potentially a very long time span? Here we will consider some of the better known and influential theories that have been put forward to help us understand this region and cultural complex. There have been three main 'groups' of archaeological investigation into the GGC in north-western Pakistan: the Italian Archaeological Mission to Pakistan of the Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (IsMEO), where some of the key scholars were Professors Tucci, Tusa, Silvi Antonini and Stacul and work focused in Swat; the early team from the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar under the direction of Professor Ahmad Hassan Dani, based in Dir and the later team under the direction of Professor Ihsan Ali, firstly at the University of Peshawar and then at Hazara and Abdul Wali Khan University, with projects based primarily in Chitral, but also carrying out work in Dir and neighbouring Bajaur.

IsMEO Interpretations

Tusa (1979) directed a number of the Italian excavations, particularly at Aligrama, and developed a theory to explain the GGC which was based on the inaccessible nature of the geography of the region. Tusa believed this

whole area was marginal in terms of contact and cultural change, although up until Period IV, he claimed that there were clear links with the Kashmir Neolithic to the north – these links were based on the shared evidence of ‘dwelling pits’, dog burials, rectangular holed sickles in bitumen, and jade objects. However from Period IV onwards (1700–1400 BCE), Tusa claimed that the material remains showed a clear contraction in terms of outside contact and influence, while indicating internal cultural development which led to what could be understood as a discrete entity, namely the Gandharan Grave Culture.

Originally working with Tusa, and then leading many of his own expeditions in Swat, Stacul (1967; 1977; 1987; 1994a) proposed that this area was part of what he called an ‘Inner Asian Neolithic’. Based on similarities between artefacts and structures (e.g. dwelling pits and jade objects) that Tusa had identified, Stacul stated that there were strong parallels between Swat and Burzahom, and there were links between these two areas and China to the north. However, Stacul also recognised that there were many differences between the Swat sites themselves, including subsistence base and function, with Kalako–deray in particular recognised as a possible stone tool factory, or as a dedicated agricultural processing site. Stacul has also emphasised issues of continuity from Period IV onwards within these Northern Valleys – like Tusa he believed that after Period IV there was more internal development within the valleys with far less reference to outside influences, and that the development and changes there could be traced through the material culture such as the pottery and burials.

Professor Dani’s Interpretations

In contrast to these views, the work of Dani, professor of archaeology first at the University of Peshawar and then at the Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad, focused on a model of population movement as the main source of development and change. Dani suggested that ‘tribes’ or ‘tribal groups’ had abandoned pastoralism and adopted sedentary agriculture by the end of the Indus Integrated Era (1967; 1992). He believed that these groups settled down within the northern valleys and became the ‘Gandharan Grave people’. Following their settlement there, they had little or no contact with groups to either the north or south and contributed little in succeeding periods to the development of the second urban-focused period. Specifically, Dani argued that the GGC represented the successive invading waves of Indo-Aryans that had been identified through analysis of the Vedic literature (1968). Dani even argued that the location of the GGC in the northern valleys was a clear link to the inward movement of the Indo-Aryans to South Asia through mountain passes such as the Khyber Pass (1991).

(continued)

Dating the GGC – Swat and Dir

Both the Italians and Professor Dani developed dating schemes based on burial and grave typologies and radiocarbon date estimates primarily from settlement sites.

Dani's dating scheme was based largely on work at the site of Timargarha in Dir where he obtained two radiocarbon dates, and then carried out considerable work on pottery typologies, grave typologies and cross dating. Dani suggested that there were four periods; Period-I from the sixteenth to thirteenth centuries BCE; Period II from the twelfth to tenth centuries BCE, Period III from the ninth to sixth centuries BCE, and Period IV from the sixth to the fourth centuries BCE (Dani 1967: 48).

In contrast, the Swat chronology was developed largely by Stacul drawing on a series of radiocarbon dates mainly from settlement sites, but also based on the previous work by IsMEO in terms of pottery classification, burial typologies and so forth. This has allowed Stacul to propose the following chronology:

Period	Site	Calibrated dates
I	Ghalegai	2970–2920 BC
II	Ghalegai	2180 BC
III	Ghalegai	1950–1920 BC
IV	Loebanr 3 / Aligrama	1730–1300 BC

Source: (Stacul 1987: 167).

The graves were linked to this Swat chronology largely through pottery classification, but some radiocarbon date estimates were calculated, and these indicated that the GGC continued up into the second century BCE. However, a rather confusing situation has arisen whereby a further periodisation of the graveyards through an artefact seriation has been presented, which is additional to Stacul's Swat chronology:

Period	Site	Calibrated dates
??	Butkara II /Katelai I	1295+/- 155 – 550+/- 40 BC
IIB – III	Katelai I	370+/- 50 – 235+/- 45 BC
IIA	Loebanr I	585+/- 50 – 500+/- 500 BC
IB	Loebanr I	985+/- 155 BC
IA	Loebanr I	1120+/- 155 – 510+/- 100 BC

Source: (Vinogradova 2001: 35).

From the late 1990s and into the first decade of the twenty-first century, further work on the GGC has taken place by different groups of scholars

from both Pakistan and the UK, linked by their connections to Professor Ihsan Ali. This work includes survey in Chitral, Dir and Bajaur, which identified a number of pre-Islamic cemeteries, though little further analysis was carried out (Ali et al. 2002; Ali et al. 2009; Ali and Lutf-ur-Rahman 2005). The main focus of this more recent work on the GGC has been Chitral, a valley to the north of both Dir and Swat where Stacul (1969) had carried out a limited excavation of some graves in the late 1960s. In the late 1990s a survey team recorded graves of a very similar construction to the graves of Swat and Dir in several places in Chitral, and in the years that followed, Professor Ali led a number of excavations of graves and cemeteries in different parts of the valley, observing that there were many large 'pre-Islamic' cemeteries throughout the whole area (Ali et al. 2002; Ali et al. 2005; Ali and Zahir 2005).

In 2007 a joint Pakistani-British team carried out excavations at a series of graves in Chitral specifically to obtain material for radiocarbon date estimates (Ali et al. 2008). The results from this are shown here:

Site and sample	Material	Calibrated date (95% confidence)
Gankoreneotek, Chitral		
Grave 1	Cremated human bone	790–420 cal BC
Sangoor, Chitral		
Grave 1	Human bone	50 cal BC – cal AD 90
Grave 21	Human bone	cal AD 440–460
Grave 22	Human bone	360–110 cal BC
Parwak, Chitral		
Grave 31, burial 1	Human bone	cal AD 770–980
Grave 31, burial 32	Human bone	cal AD 770–980
Grave 51	Human bone	cal AD 780–990

Source: (Ali et al 2008).

These radiocarbon date estimates provide an enormous range of dates, from potentially the eighth century BCE right through to the tenth century CE – what does this mean in terms of GGC? New work and re-evaluation of the GGC suggest that we are actually looking at a burial tradition spread across a wide geographical area rather than a specific culture that has endured from the early third century BCE, at Ghalegai in Swat, through to the tenth century CE, at Parwak in Chitral. Whilst there are certain similarities in terms of the graves themselves, this is no longer enough to argue for an encompassing 'culture' (Zahir 2012). Instead, it might be better to take into account the many differences between the valleys and the sites themselves, and focus attention on occupation sites in order to learn more about the different 'cultures' of Swat, Dir and other rural areas.



Figure 8.2. Anthropomorph from the ‘Copper Hoard Culture’ in the National Museum, New Delhi, India.

and beyond (Figure 8.2 and Figure 8.3), this transformation was focused far more on differentiation amongst the dead, on the individual person than on the collective – a divergence far from the establishment of an Integration Era order which opposed “both the natural environment and the human” (Miller 1985: 59).

Despite these major changes, most archaeologists now agree that there was a degree of cultural continuity or cultural survival and as D. P. Agrawal has suggested “Rulers come and go and the elite changes with new regimes; but the people continue. And so do the local cultural traditions. Despite the break, the Harappan legacy continues” (Agrawal 2007: 314). Other scholars have reached a similar conclusion with the late Greg Possehl suggesting that, although there were differences between the two urban-focused periods, they were not great enough to suggest that they were not part of a common cultural tradition (2002a). It is also worth noting that some pioneering scholars had also already acknowledged these traditions. For example, Malik (1968) pointed out similarities between the two urban-focused developments and included continuity in artefacts, such as similar ivory dice and combs, a similar weight system, etched carnelian beads, some pottery forms and some terracotta objects. However, Malik’s theory was dismissed at the time because so

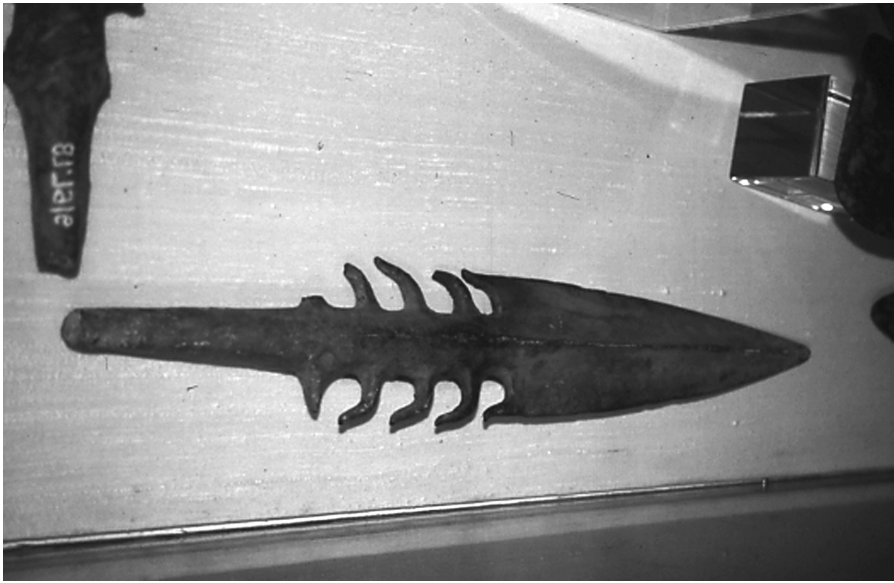


Figure 8.3. Harpoon from the 'Copper Hoard Culture' in the National Museum, New Delhi, India.

many scholars were convinced that there was a cultural hiatus between the two urban-focused civilisations (Shaffer 1993: 58).

Whilst the previous chapter examined the elements of transformation present at the end of the urban-focused phase of the Indus Valley Tradition, this chapter will consider those elements of continuity between the Indus and the later Early Historic urban-focused Traditions. Here we will evaluate the regional evidence and cite situations of continued occupation in areas previously united or linked by the tradition. One example of this is the evidence from Mundigak in Afghanistan, which showed the construction of a monumental structure in period V (Casal 1961), and we also consider the crucial evidence of cultural continuity displayed at Pirak through this period from circa 1700 to 700 BCE. As the Indus Civilisation itself was the focus of Chapter 7, this chapter begins with a focus on the regions surrounding the Indus Valley Tradition and then expands to consider a range of adjacent areas that have evidence for the development of differentiated settlements during the period 1900–1200 BCE. These include the established agricultural populations of the western Deccan at Inamgaon and Daimabad (Dhavalikar et al. 1988); the food-producers of the Ganga Valley (Sharif and Thapar 1992) and the Deccan (Korisettar et al. 2002), before considering the hunter-gatherers of Sri Lanka (Deraniyagala 1992) and the cemetery and associated settlement complex known as the Gandharan Grave Culture of the north-west region of South Asia. We will thus discuss the mosaic of regions, environmental settings and cultural developments which later became host to the second tradition of urban-focused settlement networks, stressing the clear elements of

continuity but acknowledging the new regions and environments which were to become integrated in successive eras. We should also recognise that a number of these regions were immediately adjacent to the Integration zone of the Indus Valley Tradition and thus were directly affected by the processes of deurbanisation, disintegration and restructuring which occurred there. During the Era of Integration, trade, gifts and exchanges had “simulated the local growth of chiefdoms” (Ratnagar 1991: 61), and without the asymmetric draw of the cities, their inhabitants transformed and adapted to their new social and economic environments.

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

The Northern Valleys

GANDHARAN GRAVE CULTURE (c. 1700–1400 BCE)

As noted in Chapter 7, the Gandharan Grave Culture is the name that was given to what was believed to have been a distinct cultural complex that occurred in the north-west of the subcontinent (Dani 1967) (Figure 8.4). The name ‘Gandhara’ is derived from the name given to the province of the Achaemenid or Persian Empire which is believed by many to have included much of what is now the north-west of Pakistan. The early discovery and recording of what were distinctive grave sites within an area roughly corresponding to the boundaries of this ancient province adequately explains the use of this title, although these graves and associated ‘culture’ have also been referred to as ‘Pre-Buddhist Cemeteries’ (Stacul 1966) (Box 8.2). The name Gandhara, as well as being used for a geographical area and an archaeological grave culture, is also the name of a school of Buddhist art within the same region, although the material culture and period are quite separate (Young 2009). Originally, the defining material culture was known only through the graves of its communities, particularly cist graves, where a pit was lined with large stone slabs then covered and sealed by another large capstone. Further exploration, however, uncovered related settlement sites, and this has allowed archaeologists to build up a more balanced reconstruction of both life and death on the fringes of the Integrated Era and right through to the Iron Age and Early Historic periods (Stacul 1987). The Gandharan Grave Culture was thought in the pioneering years of research to have been focused primarily within the valleys of Swat and Dir, part of the area now known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Although there was certainly a ‘core’ of known sites in these two valleys, recent explorations have demonstrated that similar graves were constructed in the Chitral Valley to the north, east across the Indus and south into the Vale of Peshawar (Ali et al. 2002). It is likely that they also extended west across the Afghan border, but it is rather hard to confirm this hypothesis through survey and excavation at present, and there are suggestions that it extended as far east as the southern Himalayas of Uttar

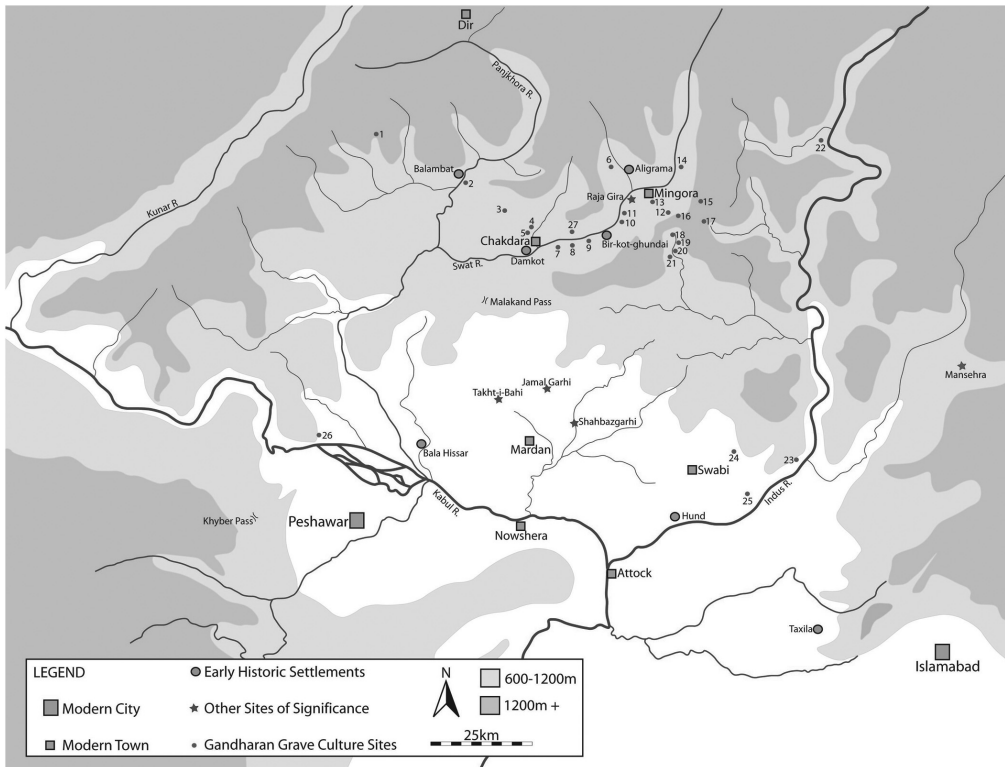


Figure 8.4. Map of sites associated with the Gandharan Grave Culture.

Box 8.2. The Copper Hoard Culture

The first copper hoard was discovered in 1822 in Kanpur District and, since that time, archaeologists have been trying to date and interpret more than 5,000 copper objects from 197 individual hoards (Sharma 2002). Some hoards have been more modestly equipped than others, as illustrated by the recovery of only five objects from Kiratpur (Sankalia 1977: 169), as opposed to the 424 objects weighing 376 kilograms in association with 102 sheets of silver discs at Gungeria (Agrawal 1971: 195; Ghosh 1989: 92). Originally encountered within the Ganga-Yamuna Doab, their core distribution range has been expanded to include Rajasthan and Bengal with stray finds as far south as the Deccan and as far north as the Nepali Terai.

The object categories associated with the hoards are well established and comprise flat anthropomorphic figures, antennae swords, harpoons, hooked spearheads, celts, shouldered celts, hatchets, double-edged axes, socketed axes and axe-adzes, bar-celts and rings. D. P. Agrawal has attributed functions to the majority of the tool types and suggested that

(continued)

bar-celts were used as crowbars for mining, rings as units of metal-weight, antennae swords for hunting big game, harpoons for catching large fish and anthropomorphs for hunting birds (Agrawal 1971: 198–201). These attributions are by no means certain and other scholars have suggested that the anthropomorphic figures may represent deities (Singh 2008: 220).

As the early hoards were recovered in isolation from other objects of material culture, it was very difficult to ascribe their contents to a distinct chronological range. However, this did not prevent a number of early archaeologists from associating them with the movement of Indo-Aryan speakers into the Indian subcontinent (Heine-Geldern 1936). Others, however, associated them with “the colonisation of the Ganges Basin by refugees and displaced persons from the Punjab and the Indus Valley during the time of the break-up of the Harappa empire and the coming of the raiders from the west” (Piggott 1950: 238). This degree of uncertainty has been steadily reduced with the ‘in situ’ recording and recovery of individual finds or groups of finds of characteristic copper objects from within residential and settlement deposits. For example, a copper anthropomorphic figure, two celts and rings were found in association with Ochre Coloured Pottery at Kiratpur, three kilometres from Lal Quila (Sankalia 1977: 169). More recently, the recovery of more than 5,000 copper objects, including sixty celts, in association with OCP Wares and round structures at the site of Ganeshwar in north-east Rajasthan has provided further verification as to a date of between 1750 and 1250 BCE (Hooja and Kumar 1997: 327).

It should be noted that although a number of early archaeologists assumed that the hoards were “unlikely to be a separate and independent evolution from that of Harappa metallurgy” (Piggott 1950: 237), metallurgical analysis has suggested that the technology and alloying were quite different (Ghosh 1989: 352). Although the source of raw materials remains unknown, the recovery of such a large single hoard from Ganeshwar has led Hooja and Kumar to suggest that the site must be close to the areas where they were manufactured (1997: 327). Finally, it should be noted that whilst early interpretations of the hoards supported concepts of this period as one of uncertainty and insecurity, the presence and frequency of such committed wealth might alternatively suggest displays of wealth enabling an individual or group to compete directly with other individuals or groups for power and hegemony. As such, it is increasingly possible to perceive such finds as evidence of a shared practice rather than evidence of a distinct ‘culture’.

Pradesh (Agrawal et al. 1995). The Gandharan Grave Culture is in many ways a good example of how archaeological cultures are constructed, not necessarily always with reference to the material culture alone, and how interpretations can vary according to context (Young 2009; Young 2010; Zahir 2012).

More than thirty cemeteries have been assigned to the Gandharan Grave Culture by their various excavators. Many are in Swat but also in the surrounding valleys of Dir, Buner, Malakand, Chitral and down into the Vale of Peshawar to the south. Recent research on the definitions and dating of graves of a similar style across such a large geographical area has called into question many entrenched ideas about what constitutes a 'culture' and whether in fact many of these grave similarities result from a widespread burial 'tradition' which spans millennia (Ali et al. 2009, 2008; Zahir 2012). The styles and types of burials that dominated at the cemeteries differed from period to period, but the main excavators, Stacul in Swat and Dani in Dir, have proposed a tentative three-fold grave typology (Stacul 1987; Dani 1992). The first phase has been dated to between circa 1700 and 1400 BCE and was characterised by the deposition of extended, single burials with grave goods of bronze and ceramics. The burial pits comprised a large upper pit, circular, oval or even rectangular, filled with earth or stones and marked on the surface by a circle of stone boulders, with a smaller pit below containing a rectangular grave chamber, often lined with dry stones and sealed with flat stone slabs (Figure 8.5 and Figure 8.6). The second phase has been dated to between circa 1400 and 1000 BCE and was distinguished by the use of cremations alongside grave goods of bronze, gold and ceramics. They were placed in large jars, often a visage vessel, and were in turn placed within a pit, frequently circular (Figure 8.7). The final phase has been dated between 1000 and 500 BCE and included fractional and multiple burials associated with iron grave goods, and are thought to have been contemporary with the emergence of the regional urban centres of Taxila and Charsadda, which will be explored in greater depth in Chapters 10 and 11 (Figure 8.8).

Whilst the cemetery sites are highly recognisable, settlement sites are also known from this period and have provided useful information with regard to such issues as population and cultural continuity and change within these valleys. For example, at the rock shelter of Ghaligai, Stacul (1969) noted that ceramics from the later levels of Periods III and IV demonstrated clear continuity with reference to choices of decoration and form, including mat impressions on the bases of many pieces; however, it was only in Period IV that copper objects were recovered for the first time in this region. It is uncertain still, however, whether this rock shelter was permanently occupied or whether it offered seasonal shelter for pastoralists. A further element of continuity within the later ceramic types of Period IV has also been found in the very earliest layers of the Bala Hisar of Charsadda, later the site of one of the large city sites of the second urban-focused period which we will examine at in some detail in

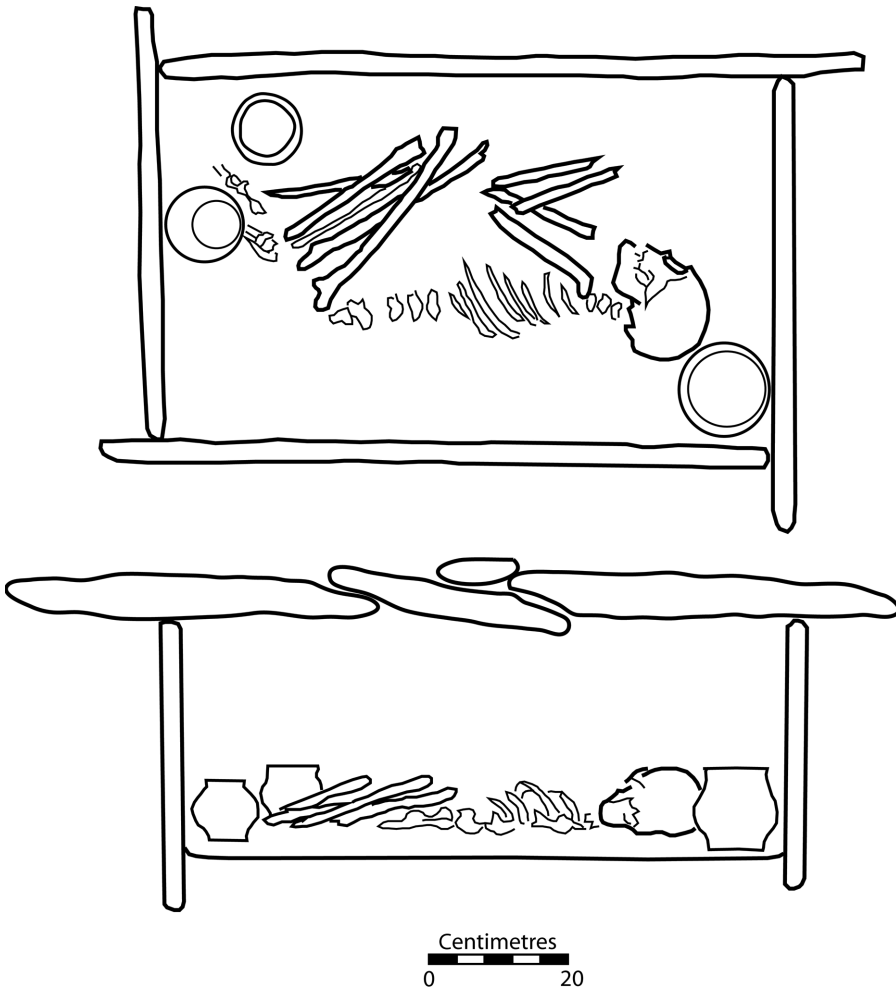


Figure 8.5. Plan and section of Gandharan Grave Culture burial at Kherai, Pakistan.

Chapters 10 and 11. A similar continuity has been found at Bir-kot-ghwandai, where what have been interpreted as pit dwellings by the excavators were succeeded by a phase of rectangular stone structures on the surface in Period IV alongside painted Black on Red Ware which showed great similarities with those from the sites of the Integration Era (Figure 8.9). The Period IV settlement of Aligrama also provided clear evidence that its inhabitants lived in rectangular structures of stone and earth floors with inset schist fireplaces and had access to limited numbers of copper objects (Stacul and Tusa 1975). This pattern of rectangular stone structures superimposed on earlier pit features was also present at Kalako-deray and Loebanr III, where they have also been associated with limited finds of copper objects.

Evidence of domesticated plants and animals has been recovered from most of the Gandharan Grave Culture sites in Swat and Dir, with cattle, sheep and



Figure 8.6. Gandharan Grave Culture burial at Timargarha, Pakistan.



Figure 8.7. Anthropomorphic vessel from the Gandharan Grave Cemetery at Timargarha, Pakistan.

goat, and barley, wheat, rice and lentils forming the most significant types. Interestingly, these plant remains have suggested that their inhabitants pursued both summer and winter cropping strategies (Young 2003). In contrast with the Integrated Era crop strategies at the sites of Harappa and Rojdi with



Figure 8.8. The Bala Hisar of Charsadda, Pakistan.

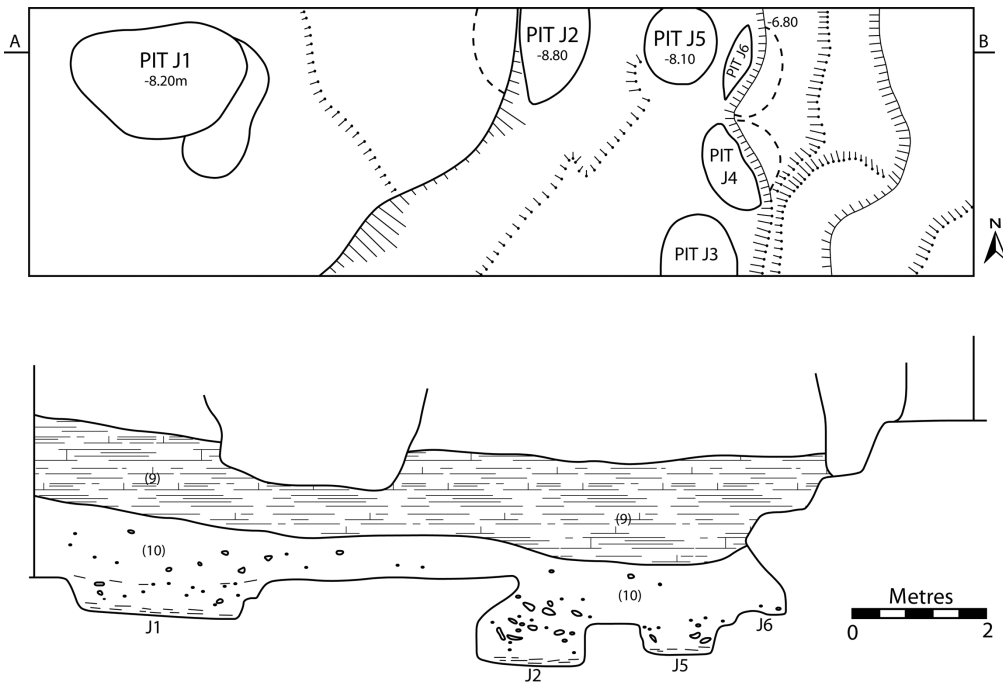


Figure 8.9. Plan and section of 'pit-dwellings' at Bir-kot-ghwandai, Pakistan.

a dominance of either summer or winter cropping, as suggested by Weber (1999), in the Localisation Era, a predominance of multi-cropping may be discerned within the northern valleys during the Localisation Era. Wild plants and animals such as deer and hackberry were also recovered, although not in

as great quantities as the remains of domesticates. Trying to determine a single subsistence approach for the human populations of these northern valleys has not been possible, as there is as much variation as similarity between the sites (Young 2003). This may be due to multiple and diverse human lifeways being represented, including sedentary agriculture, summer transhumance, winter transhumance and even fully mobile pastoralism (Young 2003; Young et al. 2008).

The Ganga-Yamuna Doab

OCHRE COLOURED POTTERY PHASE (C. 1750–1250 BCE)

In northern India, in particular the Ganga-Yamuna Doab, there is a relatively strong concentration of archaeological evidence resulting from concerted excavation and survey work. This area is also particularly interesting as it later became one of the key foci for the second urban-focused development during the Early Historic period. As a result, the sequence with its evidence for the emergence of incipient urban forms is of importance, just as the incipient urban forms in Baluchistan and the Indus Valley were to the emergence of an urbanised-focused system during the Integration Era. Ochre Coloured Pottery, or OCP as it is frequently referred to in the archaeological literature, was first identified during B. B. Lal's excavations at Hastinapura (Lal 1955: 10) and has now been found at more than ninety sites throughout the alluvium of the Doab but also into Rajasthan and the eastern Punjab through to Uttar Pradesh (Hooja and Kumar 1997: 327). This red ware ceramic was wheel-thrown with a fine to medium fabric and was covered with a thick red slip, with some sherds decorated with black bands. When rubbed between the fingers, the slip leaves an ochre colour, thus giving the ware its name. Most scholars would agree that OCP vessel forms and decorations are closely associated with the regional assemblages of the Siswal tradition in the Punjab, and assemblages from sites such as Bara or Alamgirpur during the Localisation Era (Allchin and Allchin 1982: 254). This similarity led others to contend that "The upper Doab in particular receives the stragglers of the Late Harappan culture" (Thapar 1985: 21). However, Shaffer has suggested that OCP is predominantly an archaeological construct and only became differentiated because of its powdery surface which he believed is due to poor preservation within high water tables post deposition rather than representing "any distinct ceramic tradition" (Shaffer 1986: 228). As noted earlier, OCP is present in the lowest levels of occupation at a number of later important Iron Age and Early Historic cities such as Hastinapura, Atranjikhhera and Kausambi. The small size of trenches in these very early levels means that little is known about the structural and cultural assemblages associated with the occupants of this Phase, although it has been broadly dated to between 1750 and 1250 BCE. Kausambi is located on the banks of the Yamuna River, and excavations there have yielded limited

evidence of the OCP occupation within Period I, but it may be suggested that Kausambi covered a little more than 6 hectares with the population living within an area measuring no more than 66 metres east to west (Lal 1955: 12). Whilst we do not know the extent of the OCP settlement at Atranjikhhera, Period I was 1 metre thick and provided evidence that its inhabitants lived in wattle and daub buildings and the remains of rice, wheat and cattle indicate the focus of their subsistence (Gaur 1984).

Reference should also be made to Lal Qila, where R. C. Gaur exposed an area of 630 square metres, making it one of the largest OCP sites to have been explored, as most OCP sites ranged in size between 200 and 300 square metres (Gaur 1995: 7). Situated on the banks of a tributary of the Ganga, four structural phases with OCP Wares were identified within a deposit of 2.45 metres thickness. The excavators have suggested that their inhabitants lived within circular structures constructed of timber posts and wattle and daub, with either clay or mud-plastered floors (Ghosh 1989: 252) (Figure 8.10). A further structure enclosing a circular fireplace was exposed in Trench A6 at Lal Qila and interpreted as “a sacrificial-pit” (Gaur 1995: 12). Mud brick and fired brick were both recovered from Phase III contexts (Gaur 1995: 17). Five copper objects including one celt, bone tools and two extremely early female terracotta figurines were recovered from the site. Plant and animal remains included wheat, barley and rice, perhaps again indicating that its farmers grew two crops per year, one winter and one summer, as well as rearing domesticated cattle, sheep, goat, and pig, supplemented by deer (Gaur 1995: 20). The surprisingly large size of Lal Qila is reinforced by Gaur’s excavations at Daulatpur, some 15 kilometres away, where a small mound with an area of less than 240 by 190 metres yielded evidence of OCP Wares and circular structures measuring less than three metres in diameter. Gaur has suggested that Daulatpur was a regional camping location, suggesting the presence of at least a two- or three-tiered-settlement hierarchy (Gaur 1995: 217). One particularly interesting aspect of OCP is the presence of the painted designs on a small percentage of the overall ceramic assemblages (Gaur 1995: 24), and analysis suggests that the populations of different sites appear to have favoured distinctive motifs as well as different non-scriptural graffiti (*ibid.*).

Western India and the Deccan

Research by Deccan College and MS University of Baroda in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra have demonstrated the emergence of a distinct settlement hierarchy and the presence of a number of long-distance trade links beyond the confines of the Indus Valley Tradition of western India. Emerging at the same time, or slightly later than the abandonment of the Indus cities, these ‘Chalcolithic’ sites have been mainly ordered through the presence of a series of distinctive wares restricted to the region. Whilst some

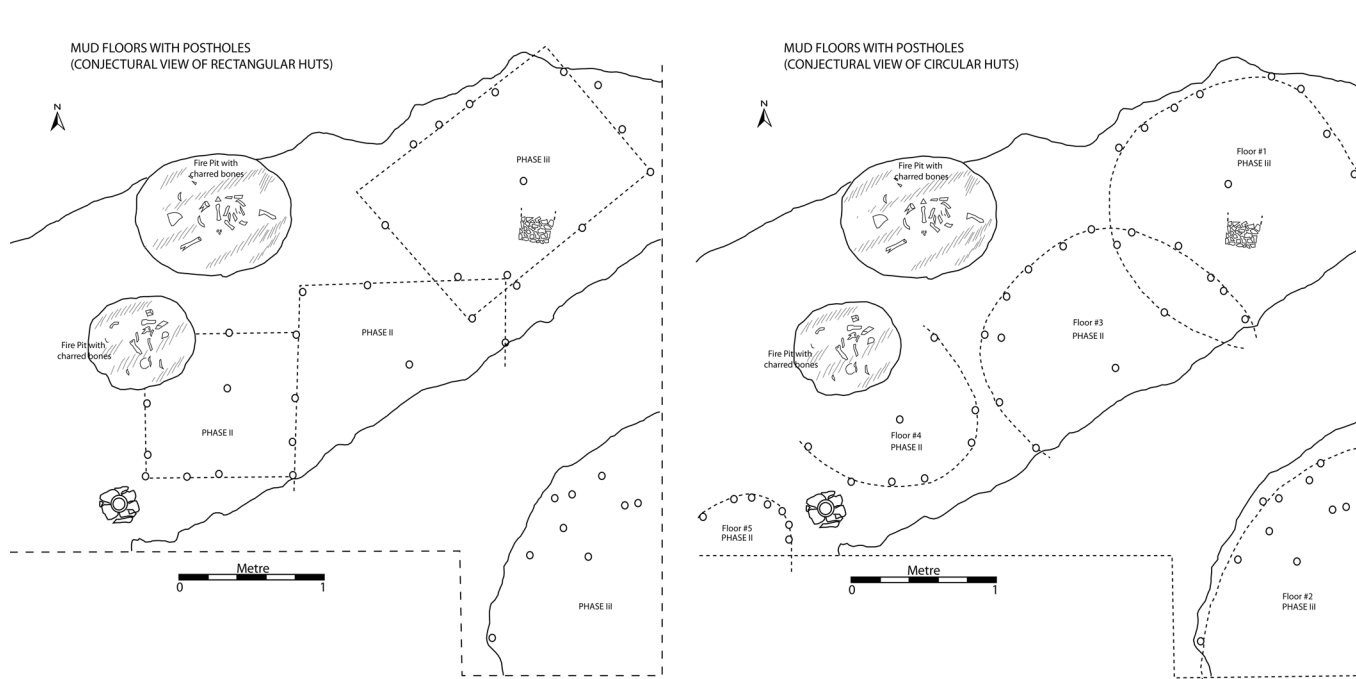


Figure 8.10. Plan of buildings at Lal Qila, India.

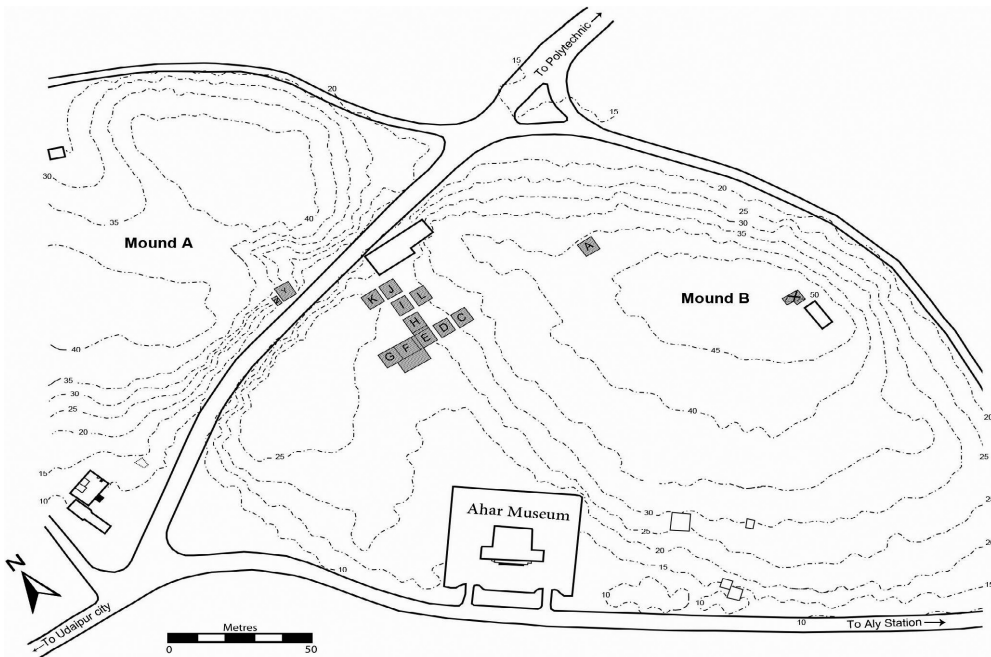


Figure 8.11. Plan of the site of Ahar, India.

scholars have sought to place a number of these developments within the Indus Valley Tradition's sphere of Integration, as at Daimabad (Sali 1984; Singh 2008: 229), others have acknowledged that they were parallel yet connected developments (Ratnagar 1991: 57). In any case, their populations formed what Dilip Chakrabarti has called an interaction zone "between the Harappan plough-agriculture and the incipient agriculture regime", an interaction which resulted in "the formulation of the neolithic-chalcolithic" (1999: 209).

AHAR-BANAS PHASE (C. 3000–1500 BCE)

One of the earliest and best documented sites known within Rajasthan is Ahar, which is located close to the city of Udaipur within the upper watershed of the Banas River. Close to significant copper deposits, Ahar is the type-site for the Ahar Culture and has a distinct sequence which began close to the beginning of the second millennium BCE (Sankalia et al. 1969). The excavation of the 14 hectare type-site has allowed the identification of more than ninety other sites within the Banas River area on account of the shared adoption of painted, black and red or cream coloured ceramics as well as vessels with distinctive incised, appliqué and cut-and-appliqué ornamental design (Hooja 1988). These sites also commonly have evidence of lustrous wares from western India and Jorwe Wares from the northern Deccan (Chakrabarti 1995: 146). Ahar itself covered an area of 500 by 275 metres and stands 12.8 metres above the adjacent drainage channels to the north and south-east (Figure 8.11). Established on silts deposited by the river, the occupants of the site's earliest period

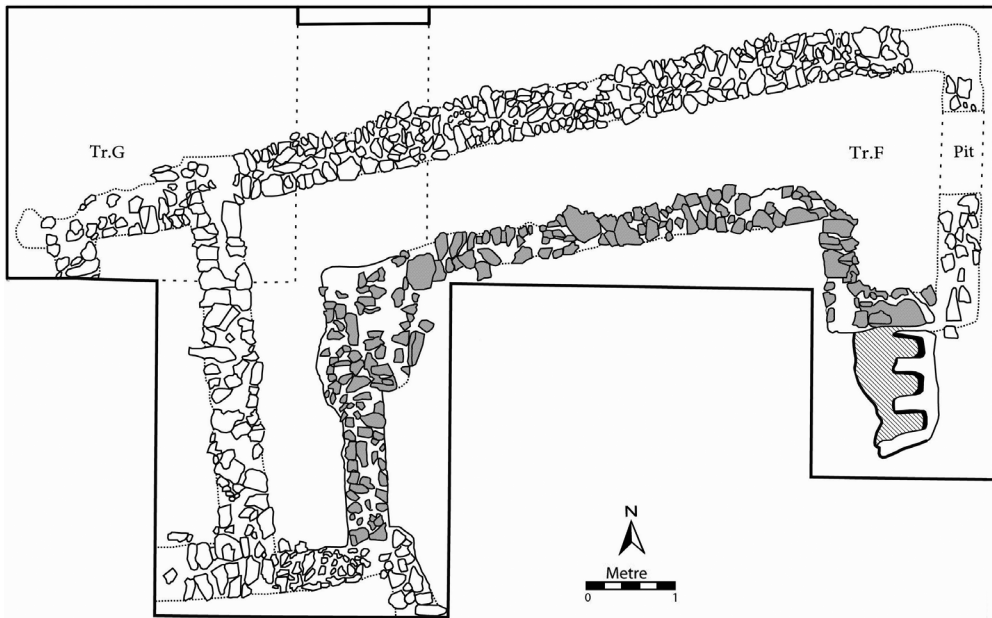


Figure 8.12. Plan of buildings in Trenches F and G at Ahar, India.

constructed buildings defined by mud walls on schist plinths. These buildings were rectangular and cardinally oriented, and one particularly well-preserved example measured six metres by 3.3 metres and another over 10 metres long; it is assumed that they would have had subdivisions internally (Sankalia et al. 1969: 11) (Figure 8.12). Querns were found inside these buildings, as well as ceramic vessels sunk in the floors, and rectangular clay fireplaces. One building contained an array of six fireplaces, prompting the excavator to suggest that the building may have hosted “community cooking” for the settlement (Sankalia et al. 1969: 12). Numerous beads were recovered, and in the earliest phase, Ia, these were mainly terracotta and schist but by Phase Ib beads were being manufactured from agate, carnelian, faience, shell and steatite, suggesting that its inhabitants had access to longer-distance trade networks, which was further reinforced by lapis lazuli examples in Phase Ic contexts. Although there were some possible affinities with Harappan vessel forms, such as dish on stand, there was a notable presence of copper tools and an absence of stone blades.

Further evidence of shared complexity during this phase has been recovered from joint excavations between Deccan College, Pune and the University of Pennsylvania (Shinde et al. 2014). Earlier excavations at the 25 hectare site of Gilund provided evidence for the use of mud brick as a building material as well as a complex of intersecting and parallel walls covering an area of 30 by 24 metres. Surviving to a height of two metres, the original excavators identified the building as a “very important structural complex of public utility” (Ghosh 1989: 150). Further explored between 1999 and 2005, the discovery

of a clay silo containing more than 100 seal impressions within a storage magazine indicates the centralising role of the population of this important settlement as well as potential trans-regional linkages as far as Baluchistan and eastern Iran, including ones with Integrated Era settlements to the west (Shinde 2008). Topographic maps of the site indicate that there are currently two mounds, both of which have surviving elements of ‘circumvallation’. Its excavators have reflected that should subsequent fieldwork find both these mounds independent, like Mohenjo-daro, it would “suggest fairly close interaction between the peoples of Sindh and Mewar in the second half of the 3rd millennium (2500–1900 BC)” (Shinde et al. 2005: 162). Parallel research at the site of Balathal has provided evidence for the presence of a large central complex covering 600 square metres alongside a defined street and lane within a residential quarter, as well as evidence for copper working and ceramic kilns, all of which indicated the presence of incipient planning (Misra 2001: 513). Dating evidence from Balathal suggests that it was already established before the Integration Era but that it offered a continuity of occupation through into the Era of Localisation.

KAYATHA PHASE (C. 2000–1700 BCE)

Later in date than the initial phases of the Ahar-Banas to the north, the chronology of the Kayatha Phase of the Malwa plateau also suggests that the communities which adopted its distinct ceramics were contemporaries of the Integration Era of the Indus Valley Tradition but that they survived the demise of the latter’s city populations. Although more than forty associated sites have been identified, the publication report of the excavation at the type-site in the 1960s continues to be one of the most useful sources for this archaeological phase (Ansari and Dhavalikar 1975). Located 25 kilometres east of Ujjain, Kayatha shared a common location with many of the settlements of Central India on black cotton soil and close to a water source; in the case of Kayatha, a tributary of the Chambal River. The sequence at the site was 12 metres deep, and Period I has been termed the Kayatha Culture, although it may be more useful to consider this as a phase rather than a culture. Unfortunately, no plans were published for this early phase, although structures appear to have comprised wattle and daub walls built around timber posts with floors of silt (Ansari and Dhavalikar 1975: 4). Although no evidence for the involvement of its inhabitants with manufacturing was found, this phase produced copper axes and bangles alongside a stone blade industry and beads of shell, carnelian, and agate, and over 40,000 steatite micro-beads. Three ceramic wares predominated at the site: vessels with dark-brown slip with purple-painted designs; red painted buff ware; and comb-incised patterns. Although the site was abandoned at the end of the phase, the excavators have identified the presence of Ahar-Banas material in Period II and then Malwa Phase material in Period III (Ansari and Dhavalikar 1975: 7).

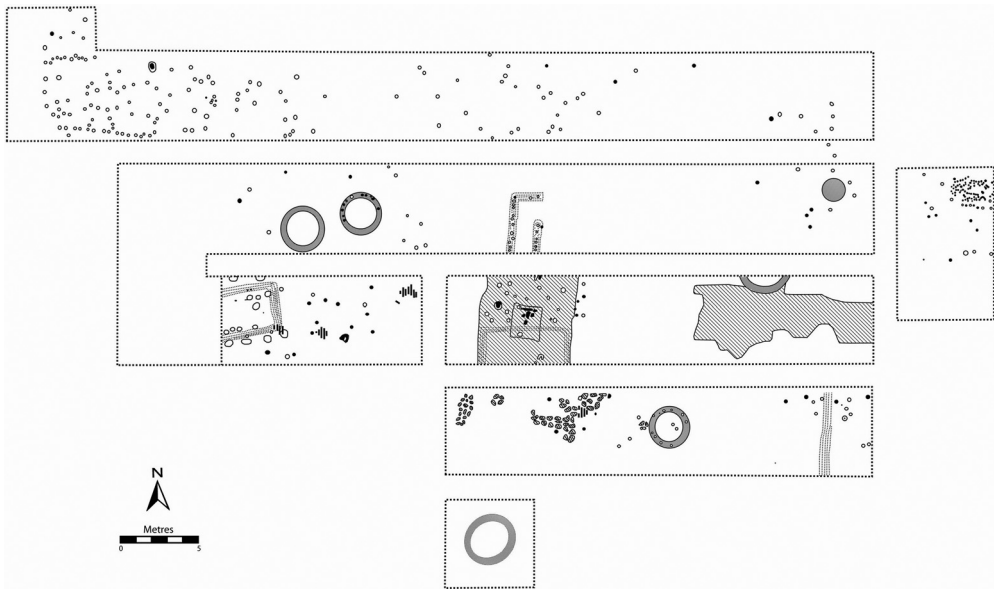


Figure 8.13. Plan of buildings at Navdatoli, India.

MALWA PHASE (C. 1700–1500 BCE)

The Malwa phase has been recognised at more than 100 sites within the watersheds of the Chambal, Narmada and Betwa rivers and into Maharashtra. Its communities were characterised by their use of distinctive Malwa Ware ceramics, which comprised a thick fabric strengthened with chopped husk, slipped in orange or buff, and painted with more than 600 motifs in black or red, plus cream-slipped ware. Although the sites of Eran, Nagda, Kayatha, Maheshwar and Navdatoli have all been excavated, the evidence from the latter has been most fully published. Navdatoli is located on the southern bank of the Narmada River, opposite the contemporary site of Maheshwar, and covered an area of roughly 400 by 400 metres. The occupation of the site has been divided into four phases which included Malwa Ware and painted Black and Red Ware in Phase I, the earliest phase; the disappearance of painted Black and Red Ware in Phase II; the appearance of Jorwe Ware and lustrous red ware in Phase III, accompanied by a fire; and in Phase IV, storage jars with appliqué decoration (Sankalia et al. 1971: 38) (Figure 8.13). A total of more than 7,000 fragments of broken chalcedony blades and rejects were recovered from most structures, allowing an interpretation that its inhabitants were self-sufficient or apparently lacked centralisation or differentiation. Little copper was recovered, although three of the more complete celts had deliberate individually distinguishing marks or symbols formed by circles. The presence of a fragment of a copper sword or dagger with a midrib on both sides has raised interesting analogies with Western Asia, and postulates the presence of far-reaching trading networks as well as a demand for individualising exotic items (Sankalia et al. 1971: 393).

The horizontal excavations on Mound IV at Navdatoli exposed a number of the structures from Phase I and these included five one-roomed square or rectangular buildings defined by wooden posts, the largest of which measured six by 4.5 metres. A further eleven circular posted buildings measuring between 2.4 and 3.6 metres in diameter were excavated and identified as stores. Additionally, the excavators recorded a series of pits, lime floors and a number of cardinaly oriented burnt floors, one of which measured 6.7 square metres and appeared to have contained a rectangular firepit (Sankalia et al. 1971: 54). The second phase comprised a further eight circular and eight rectangular structures, with the largest rectangular structure measuring 12 by 6 metres, with a double thickness post interior wall dividing it. Some of these structures also had rectangular fireplaces inside them. There also seemed to have been a large, unoccupied space within the settlement, offering a community focus for its inhabitants.

Although Navdatoli does not appear to have been walled by its inhabitants, there is evidence for wall construction at the sites of Eran and Nagda. The former is located on the bend of a tributary of the River Betwa, which enclosed its north, east and west sides, and the site has a sequence of almost nine metres depth. The 'Chalcolithic' phases appear to have included Kayatha Ware in the earliest levels and Malwa Ware in its later occupation. During the Malwa Phase, the exposed southern side of the settlement was enclosed by a mud rampart, measuring 30 metres wide and surviving to a height of 6.41 metres, and a moat, measuring 36.6 metres long and 5.5 metres wide (Ghosh 1989: 135). Unfortunately, no information about possible internal layout and structural size is known. Whilst there is debate as to whether this wall represented a defence against humans or floods, the presence of what may be a mud and mud-brick rampart bastion at the site of Nagda has also been recorded (Ghosh 1989: 303). These monuments mark major communal investment and would have differentiated their walled populations from the surrounding villages.

As noted earlier, Malwa Phase sites are also known within Maharashtra and have been excavated at Daimabad, Chandoli, Inamgaon and Malvan, providing a broad range of more than 150 contemporary site types and locations. The largest of these sites is Daimabad with five metres of archaeological material, located on black cotton soil on the left bank of a tributary of the Godavari River. Although occupied during the Malwa Phase, there is also clear evidence for three preceding phases at the site, including I, which has been attributed to the Savalda Culture (c. 2300 BC); II, which is thought to have had Late Harappan affinities (c. 2300–1800 BCE) and III, which was associated with buff and cream ware (Sali 1986). The settlement of Phase IV, the Malwa, formed a major population agglomeration and covered an area of 20 hectares. Its inhabitants lived in rectangular structures and the site also provided evidence for a copper workshop and sixteen urn and pit burials. The presence

of a central “religious complex”, comprising a residential block with a large mud platform with drain and soakpit, a variety of different shaped altars and an apsidal structure further contributes to the identification of this site as a primate regional ‘anchor’ (Ghosh 1989: 114).

In contrast with the very large settlement at Daimabad, Inamgaon only covered an area of five hectares, but open area excavations at the site have exposed the layout and structures of this small site rather more clearly. A total of thirty-two individual houses belonging to the Malwa Phase, the earliest at Inamgaon, were uncovered (Figure 8.14). Of these, twenty-eight were rectangular, one circular and three had been constructed with pit foundations. Dhavalikar has identified evidence for planning at the site, as the individual structures appear to have been laid out in rows with roads or lanes between them, but there was a notable absence of the significant structures found in the following (Jorwe) phase discussed later (Dhavalikar et al. 1988: 1002). As in other contemporary sites, intramural double urn burials for children were identified within the houses (Figure 8.15 and Figure 8.16). Evidence for the site occupants’ access to copper and stone tools as well as beads of terracotta, jasper, ivory and carnelian, shell, steatite, faience and gold are interesting as Inamgaon is an inland site. Similar cultural assemblages have also been identified at the sites of Chandoli and Nevasa, both of which are also located on black cotton soils close to river courses (Deo and Ansari 1965; Sankalia et al. 1960).

JORWE PHASE (C. 1500–900 BCE)

The succeeding Jorwe Phase has been found throughout Maharashtra and its communities were characterised by their use of Jorwe Ware, a ceramic ware with a well-fired fine body with an orange or red matt surface painted with black geometric designs. There was an overall rise in site numbers to more than 200, which represents an expansion of farming populations across the black cotton soils, but it also witnessed the emergence of a three-tiered settlement hierarchy (Coningham 1995a: 61). The apex of the hierarchy appears to have been the ‘anchor’ settlement at Daimabad, which expanded in Phase V to 30 hectares and has provided evidence of rectangular and circular structures, complete with forty-eight urn burials within houses, as well as a distinct road and lane layout (Figure 8.17). The earliest levels of this phase also included ceramic kilns, an apsidal shrine, and altars and firepits along with the presence of a notable ochre covered terracotta of four figures (Ghosh 1989: 114). Reference has also been made to the presence of a wall and bastions around the site, clearly indicative of the organising abilities of its population. The sites forming a second tier of settlement between five and 10 hectares included Prakash and Inamgaon. During the Jorwe phase, Inamgaon, which was surrounded on three sides by a meander of the River Ghod, was also enclosed on the fourth side by a wall and ditch measuring 195 metres long and 20 metres

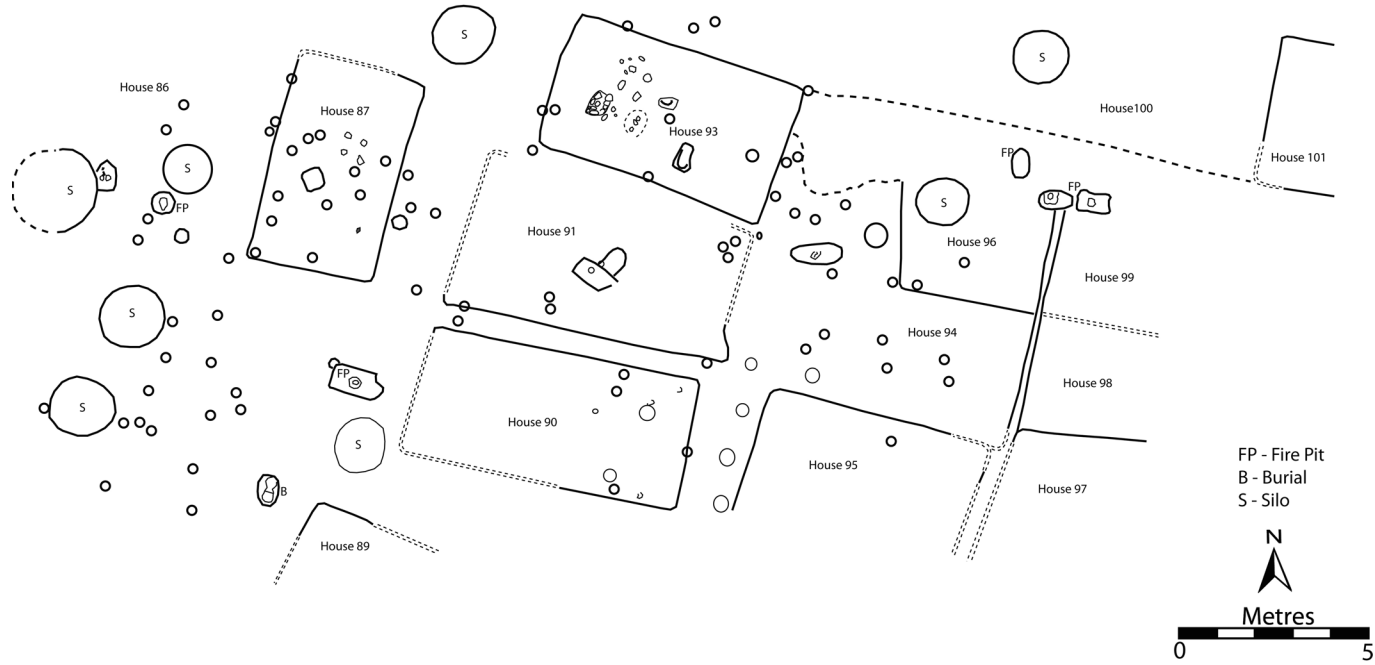


Figure 8.14. Plan of buildings at Inamgaon, India, during the Malwa Phase.

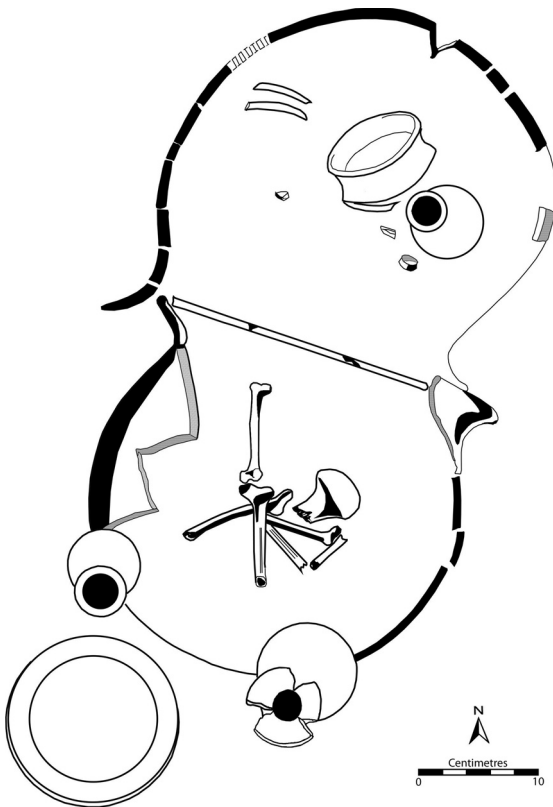


Figure 8.15. Intramural urn burial at Inamgaon, India (i).

wide (Dhavalikar et al. 1988: 237). Internally, the settlement appears to have been planned with rows of rectangular structures separated by cardinally oriented roads, and the excavators have suggested that the chief lived in the centre surrounded by wealthy farmers, with artisans to the west (Dhavalikar et al. 1988: 1002). The excavators also identified a public temple and central granary beside the chief's residence, complete with storage bins, pit silos and a firepit within a 100 square metre complex, dwarfing the average residences, which were 15 square metres in size (Dhavalikar et al. 1988: 193).

The settlement's inhabitants were clearly engaged in manufacturing and probably supplied completed objects to the third tier of small agricultural settlements (between one and three hectares). This suggestion has been based on evidence of workshops present within nine of the sixty-nine excavated structures at Inamgaon, including ceramic kilns and material consistent with smithing, and bone and stone blade working. There was evidence for trade over long distances in the form of gold and ivory, probably obtained from Karnataka, as well as shell from the Saurashtra coast. Ceramics manufactured at both Daimabad and Inamgaon appear to have been traded to the inhabitants of smaller Jorwe sites, and one Jorwe vessel has been recovered from Navdatoli

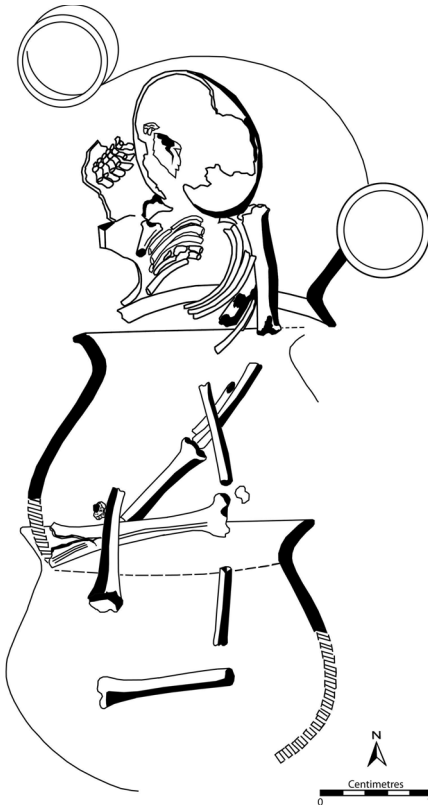


Figure 8.16. Intramural urn burial at Inamgaon, India (ii).

in Central India and others from late Neolithic and ‘Chalcolithic’ levels within Peninsular India (Paddayya 1973: 84). The period from 1200 to 900 BCE is considered a Late Jorwe Phase, and at Inamgaon there was a reduction in agriculture and an increase in hunting and, whilst the site continued to be occupied until circa 700 BCE, many other Jorwe sites in the northern Deccan were abandoned.

Peninsular India (c. 2100–1700 BCE)

As noted in Chapter 4, many of the earlier Neolithic settlements of Peninsular India were also occupied during the succeeding period, but many sequences were incomplete. Settlements of this phase were generally located on the top of granite hills or on plateaus situated between hills rather than on valley bottoms or plains. There was continuity in settlement form with occupants living in round wattle and daub huts, but the stone celts and blades of the earlier Neolithic phase were now joined by copper and bronze items. Evidence of this continuity is clear at Tekkalakota, where the granite outcrops which had hosted the Neolithic settlement were also occupied during Phase II, and the assemblage of microlithic tools and ground axes were augmented with copper objects and a dull red ware, and Black and Red Ware sherds (Nagaraja Rao and

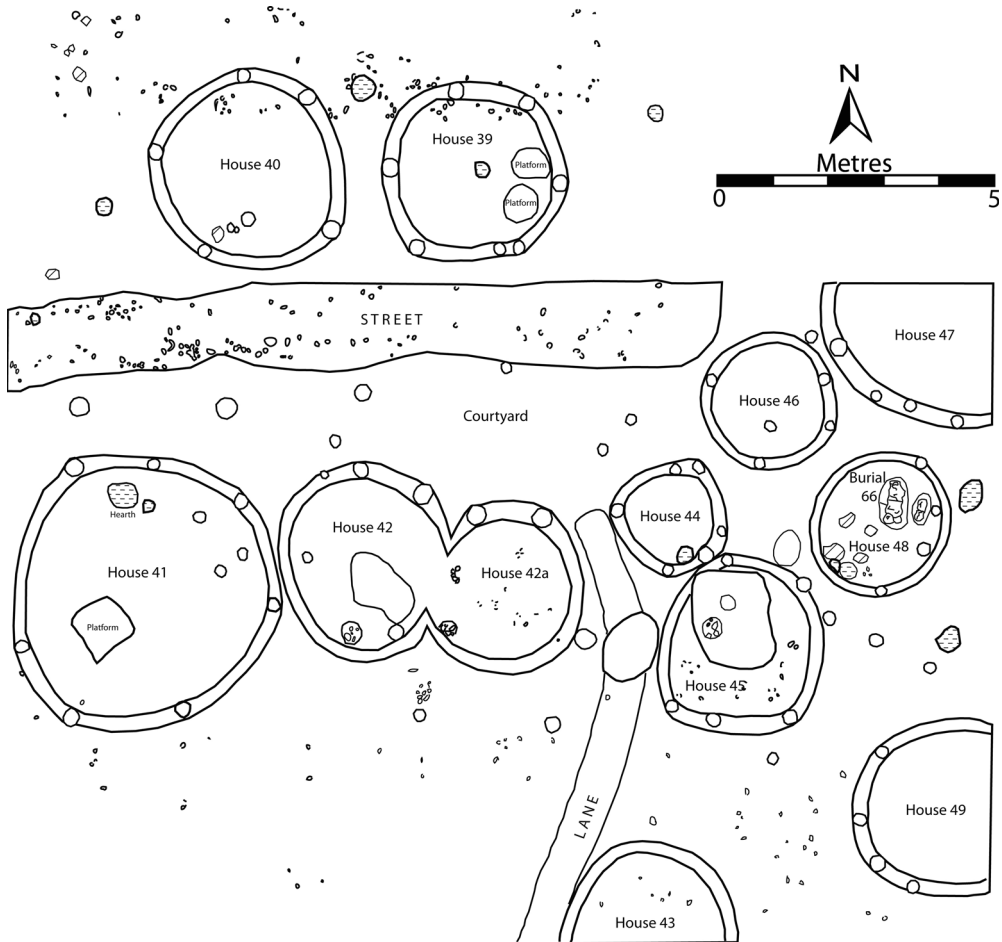


Figure 8.17. Plan of buildings at Daimabad, India, during the Jorwe Phase.

Malhotra 1965: 9). Continuity has also been indicated in the use of boulders to define circular structures, as exposed in Trench 5, and within burial practices. The latter included extended adult burials and intramural child burials within urns, although some burials were now furnished with Black and Red Ware vessels. As noted earlier, the presence of copper objects has been generally used to differentiate a distinct 'Chalcolithic' phase at the site. However, there were only five examples of copper artefacts, and a copper axe-adze from Period I may have been intrusive. As a result, whilst the excavator noted strong similarities with the site of Jorwe (Nagaraja Rao and Malhotra 1965: 76), the term 'Chalcolithic' may mask a fundamental continuity altered only by the addition of a few copper objects. Analogies between the Black and Red Ware burial vessels and the burial practices at Tekkalakota, including multiple vessel burial, and those of the northern Deccan were also noted (*ibid.*: 96). Paddayya has further recorded the presence of Jorwe Ware in a number of late Neolithic and 'Chalcolithic' sites in the Shorapur Doab (1973: 84). Whilst



Figure 8.18. View of the Prehistoric settlement at Brahmagiri, India (courtesy Peter Johansen).

two phases were clearly distinguished at Tekkalakota, such a definition is less easy at Brahmagiri, where Period IB was only distinguishable from the preceding Neolithic layer on account of the addition of a bronze ring, chisel and rod (Ghosh 1989: 82), again reinforcing the difficulties of attributing a title of ‘Chalcolithic’ (Figure 8.18). References have been made to clearer relevant sequences at the sites of Ramapuram and Singanapalli in Andhra Pradesh (Chakrabarti 1999: 156) but their full publication is still awaited.

Sri Lanka (c. 2300–1000 BCE)

As noted in Chapter 1, the long standing model of Sri Lanka’s later prehistory is one where there was no evidence for the presence of a Neolithic or ‘Chalcolithic’ population, as the cultural technologies apparently transitioned directly from microlithic tool-using communities to iron tool-using ones (Deraniyagala 1992: 353). The appearance of iron objects and evidence for iron working seem to have occurred very suddenly at circa 1000 BCE and heralded a number of significant social, political, ideological, subsistence and economic changes. Indeed, Siran Deraniyagala has listed a number of sites across the island where there is clear stratigraphic evidence for an abrupt transition from what he calls the ‘Stone Age’, or Mesolithic, to the Iron Age. Furthermore, there is little evidence existing which indicates the mixing of characteristic materials between contexts from the two periods; that is, few stone tools have been found in Iron Age contexts at these sites (Deraniyagala 1992: 353).

Two sites appear to challenge this trend, Pomparipu and the Varana rock shelter. Pomparipu is an Iron Age cemetery located on the north-west coast of the island close to the mouth of the Malwattu Oya, where stone tools were recovered from individual burials, although they may have been redeposited (Begley 1981). However, ceramics dating to the Iron Age have recently been reported in association with stone tools within the sequence of the rock shelter at Varana (Gamini Adikari pers. comm.).

It is clear from the analysis by Deraniyagala (1992) that most of the island's distinct environmental zones were occupied by populations of microlithic tool users, whose subsistence strategies varied according to the zone or zones they inhabited. For example, communities at sites such as Mantai on the western coast and those around the coast of the Jaffna Peninsula exploited marine resources such as *Dugong dugon* or sea cow, oysters and other shells (Carswell et al. 2013). In contrast to these coastal and marine-based strategies, the site of Bellan-bandi Palassa in the inland hill country has provided evidence of an open air Mesolithic site with a broad spectrum subsistence based on snails, ter-rapins, land monitor lizards, fowl, water buffalo, elephant, wild board, deer, hare, pangolin, porcupine, monkey, jackal or possibly domestic dog and cat among other animals (Deraniyagala and Kennedy 1972: 37; Deraniyagala 1992: 306). At least twelve human skeletons were recovered at Bellan-bandi Palassa, and whilst the excavators did not report burial pits, they did note the presence of large, heavy stone slabs over the head and chest of some skeletons, suggesting a purposeful practice. A TL date generated from burnt quartz closely associated with one of the human skeletons at Bellan-bandi Palassa provided a range of 6500 BP+/-700 in the early 1970s (Deraniyagala and Kennedy 1972: 45), although more recent dating series have pushed the site's chronology into the terminal Pleistocene (Simpson et al. 2008). Excavations at one of the earliest Iron Age settlements in the island, Anuradhapura, have provided evidence of substantial occupation by microlithic tool users in the basal gravels at the site, although it is assumed that this occupation was seasonal as the site is within the Dry Zone. Like many other sites in Sri Lanka, there was no apparent transitional zone between these hunter-gatherers and the Iron Age populations which settled there (Coningham 1999; 2006a). We will explore the expansion of iron-using communities and the rise of urban forms in Sri Lanka further in Chapter 10.

CONCLUSIONS

The previous discussion clearly demonstrates that the timespan between the two urban-focused developments was a period where transformation is evident in the archaeological record; however, there is also convincing evidence for considerable continuity. The investment in excavations within the Ganga Basin and further south by the ASI and Deccan College, Pune and the MS

University of Baroda, has made a major impact on our knowledge of this period, as well as work in other parts of South Asia. Collectively, it has filled the gap observed by Amalananda Ghosh, who commented in Volume 10 of *Ancient India* in 1955 that “[t]he gulf of the Dark Age has been narrowed down but not filled” (Ghosh 1955: 3), a point reiterated by Jaya Menon who has stated that “[t]he ‘Dark Age’ has been largely filled.” (2008: 33). By moving away from traditional explanations of change driven by the diffusion of ideas, or of human migrations and invasions, it is now possible to reframe the second development of urbanised populations within South Asia as part of a continuum, or longer term process. As Shaffer states “the cultural similarities of Harappan and NBPW [Northern Black Polished Ware] groups can be understood as a unique cultural tradition traceable for millennia” (1993: 54). In the place of early theories of human migrations, diffusions and associated chaos, we may instead suggest that this was a period of steady development, although clearly not on the scale of either the preceding Indus or succeeding Early Historic urban-focused eras (Coningham 1995a). This Era was also one which Sankalia and colleagues typified as being characterised by steady agricultural settlement by “Chalcolithic farming colonies” (1971: 429), and, as we shall see in the following chapter, new agglomerated and urbanised communities were to emerge across the entire subcontinent from these foundations, in association with the spread of iron-working during a new Era of Regionalisation by the beginning of the first millennium BCE.

It is also useful at this stage to look at the work of Guillermo Algaze, who applied the concept of Wallerstein’s World Systems Theory to the role of long-distance exchange and the expansion of the Uruk in Mesopotamia (1993). Algaze traced the demand for timber, stone and metal of the southern Mesopotamian cities to the development of trade routes to eastern Anatolia and the raw resource-rich peripheries, and there are comparisons here with the major urban settlements of the Indus located in alluvial areas and their development of strong, long-distance trade routes. Driven by their need for exotic materials to confirm legitimacy and authority, rulers within the cities sought to control the flow of materials from their peripheries. In a later version of his model, Algaze refocused attention to those peripheries and stressed that the communities which engaged in this trade on the peripheries, or along such trade routes, were themselves transformed. He stated that “native elites controlling either the actual resources being exploited or access to those resources take advantage of their natural role as organisers of the means of production and (at times) mediators of the exchange to consolidate and extend their power, both in the context of their own societies and via-a-vis their rivals” (2005: 3). Perhaps directly applicable to the emergence of settlements in western India, Baluchistan and the north-west, he also observed that the outcomes of such asymmetric engagements were bound to be limited for the peripheral communities as the networks were geared towards the extraction of raw resources rather than greater socio-economic integration and that many became focused

on specific or limited numbers of items (*ibid.*: 4). This asymmetric relationship has also been observed by Norman Yoffee who noted that “Tension between the center and periphery also exists, since the center is concerned with detaching the means for political action from the periphery, and groups on the periphery are reluctant to surrender their local political autonomies” (2005: 138).

Rojdi may offer an example of the result of this contact with evidence of both cultural connections and major communal activities, although a number of scholars have argued that “this settlement was not incorporated in the Harappan state(s)” (Ratnagar 1991: 57). It is also interesting to reflect that a similarly liminal position has been attributed to Nindowari with some scholars identifying it as part of the Integrated zone (Possehl 1986: 61) and others as beyond (Ratnagar 1991: 59). Although not urbanised or integrated on similar lines to the settlements within the core alluvium, it is also possible to suggest that not all these communities necessarily suffered adversely when the Integration Era fragmented. Indeed, it is possible that it was no longer advantageous for such populations to subscribe to integration and restructured their emphasis. Instead, it is highly possible that peripheral elites continued to benefit from their position on communication and exchange networks but engaged in different materials and perhaps with different trading partners. Wattenmaker also observed that the disintegration of centralisation, and its associated extraction of surplus which originally drove the circulation of ‘display goods’, need not end the value of such goods. In some cases, ‘display goods’ continued to be valued and exchanged and the specialists associated with them continued to be supported despite a degree of lower socio-economic integration (1994: 204).

A growth in individuality was also apparent in such sites, with examples of relatively disproportionately wealthy graves and the appearance of distinct weaponry and objects of authority and rank as recovered from hoards and cemeteries across Baluchistan and the north-west (Jarrige 1991) and perhaps exemplified by the personalisation of the chariot from Daimabad (Sali 1986). This would match with what Mizoguchi has termed a “vicious reflexive cycle”, in which non-utilitarian imports become viewed an essential to the reproduction of daily life (2002: 163). Finally, it is noteworthy that Algaze also observed that “population dislocation as a consequence of environmental or political crises” might represent a major causal factor for expansion, more so than population growth (2005: 123). As a result, we have to at least consider the possibility of some shifts in population from the heavily occupied settlement of Indus and Ghaggar to the east and south (Thapar 1985: 21). It is also important to note, however, that such a model imposes a number of limitations on the human communities within the periphery and suppresses their ability to demonstrate societal resilience and resistance. Indeed, it is highly questionable whether their inhabitants would have ever considered themselves as peripheral. Such communities responded in different ways and over different time-spans and, as this chapter has demonstrated, they were not dulled imitations of the Integration Era.

Whilst demonstrating transformation and restructuring within a context of continuity and sustainable growth, it is also relevant to return to the question of linguistic transformation as this time period is the one that many scholars would associate with the spread of Indo-European languages (Ratnagar 2006). Despite the challenges already raised in this volume concerning the complexities of mapping languages onto material culture and the dating of the *Rig Veda*, a number of leading scholars have hypothesised the movement of Indo-Aryan speakers from regions north and west of the Indus Valley Tradition through into the subcontinent (Kenoyer 2006). Indeed, much focus has been placed on the Bactria Margiana Archaeological Complex (BMAC) as representing the emergence of a series of chiefdoms in Central Asia between 1900 and 1500 BCE, chiefdoms which appear to have been associated with the Integrated Era of the Indus Valley Tradition through trade (Wright 2010: 229). Whilst clearly involved in exchange across the worlds of the Integrated Era, perhaps even as far south as Gilund, there is little evidence for demographic disruption identified amongst the skeletal collections from this period (Kennedy 2000: 304). To explain this apparent absence of evidence, Kohl has suggested that such movements were “largely peaceful and protracted, continuing throughout most of the second millennium BC” (2007: 235). While Mark Kenoyer has advocated the search for “ephemeral sites” associated with such possible movements, he also cautioned that “we must ask ourselves if archaeological evidence can ever be correlated with linguistic models about the origins of the Indo-Aryan speaking communities of South Asia” (Kenoyer 2006: 90). We would agree with this position and add that whether one looks at a broader perspective of the movement of Indo-European speakers into South Asia as a whole or just speakers of Sinhalese into Sri Lanka, for example, general archaeological evidence is unsuitable for this task. Whilst examining the latter, we concluded that issues of alternative language transition through trade or loans as well as issues of bilingualism or trilingualism were pertinent and suggested that linguistic change might also reflect issues of acculturation, legitimation and belonging rather than biological origin (Coningham et al. 1996). It may well have been the case that new ‘exotic’ individualistic objects were as attractive as new ‘exotic’ languages for new and old elites to differentiate and restructure themselves. Indeed, the English language was adopted by an emergent low country elite in colonial Sri Lanka and English is colloquially known as *Kaduwa* or the ‘Sword’ on account of its social divisiveness (Salgado 2007: 22). On the other hand, John Robb’s modelling of random language change has demonstrated that “random, directionless processes can add up into directed results” (1991: 287), and thus random changes might account for the resultant linguistic patterns we find today across South Asia. At this point on the nexus between language, tradition and material culture, the volume will continue to review the archaeology of the Early Historic Tradition in the remainder of Part III.