

CONNECTIONS AND COMPLEXITY

New Approaches to the Archaeology
of South Asia



For Dr. P.

Edited by
Shinu Anna Abraham
Praveena Gullapalli
Teresa P. Raczek
Uzma Z. Rizvi



Walnut Creek, California

CHAPTER 3



Commodities and Things: The Kulli in Context

Rita P. Wright

In 1986, Gregory Possehl published the first comprehensive account of the Kulli complex, a third- and early second-millennia BC culture in southern Balochistan that was known from the surveys of Sir Aurel Stein (1931, 1937) and later discussed in greater detail in Stuart Piggott's, *Prehistoric India* (1950). Possehl's (1986) *Kulli: An Exploration of an Ancient Civilization in South Asia* placed the culture in the context of what was then known from archaeological research on the Indus Civilization, the Iranian Plateau, and Pakistani Balochistan. In it, he sought to reframe economic processes during a time of change when cultural exchanges shifted from interaction among small-scale settlements to more complex societies. Although these changes occurred throughout the 3rd millennium BC, my focus here is on the years from 2800 to 1900 BC that led to the emergence of the Kulli culture as a center of trade and its final abandonment at the end of the early 2nd millennium BC.¹

My interest in returning to the Kulli is based on two factors. Since 1986, there have been renewed excavations, surveys, and interpretations of data from sites related to the Kulli region, the Iranian Plateau, Pakistani Balochistan, and the Indus. Most relevant to this discussion is the field research in northern and southern Balochistan (Besenval 1997a, 1997b, 2005; Franke-Vogt 2008; Jarrige 1994; Jarrige *et al.* 2011); the development of a chronology based on stylistic analyses of ceramic styles at the sites of Kulli, Mehi, and Nindowari (Jarrige and Quivron 2008; Quivron 2008); and publication of the report of the excavations at Nindowari (Jarrige *et al.* 2011) (see Figure 3.1 for an orientation to sites discussed

Connections and Complexity: New Approaches to the Archaeology of South Asia, edited by S. A. Abraham, P. Gullapalli, T. P. Raczek, and U. Z. Rizvi, 47–62. ©2013 Left Coast Press. All rights reserved.

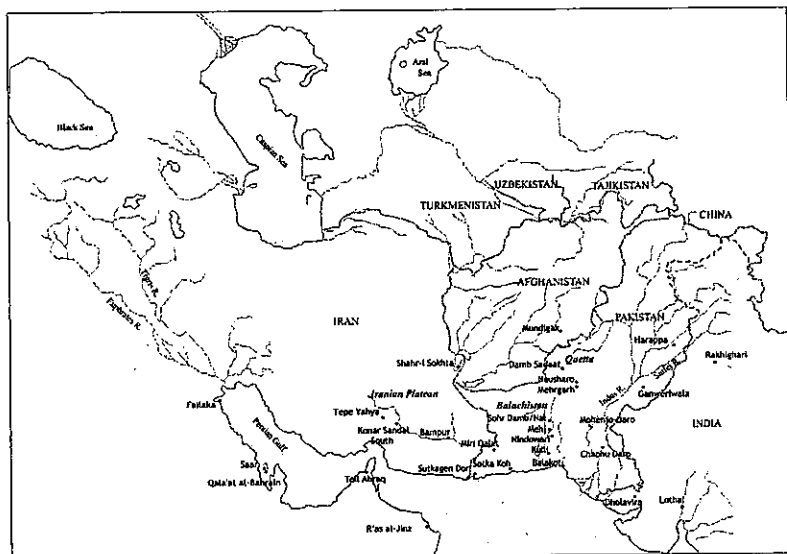


Figure 3.1 Sites discussed in the text.

here and Table 3.1 for a general chronology). On the Iranian Plateau, the discovery of the site of Konar Sandal South in the Jiroft (Madjidzadeh and Pittman 2008) and new interpretations of evidence from Shahr-i Sokhta (Cortesi *et al.* 2008) have also extended the boundaries of intercultural contact. No less significant are revisions in exchange theory and some new ways of thinking about the significance of material distributions and cultural contact. I begin below with exchange theory.

Important Wealth and Commercialized Exchange

The essence of Possehl’s argument in his book on the Kulli was the refinement of definitions of trade and exchange in the 3rd millennium BC among settlements on the Iranian Plateau, the Kulli in southern Balochistan, and the Indus Valley. Debates on these topics by contemporary scholars viewed exchange in dichotomous terms. Based on Lamberg-Karlovsky (1977) and others (see Possehl 1986, 75–6), some researchers interpreted material exchanges on the Iranian Plateau as market networks based on commercial transactions, while other scholars viewed early third-millennium BC exchange networks as reciprocal exchanges that were not for “material” gain (Dales 1977; Shaffer 1978). In reference to the Iranian Plateau, Possehl viewed exchange networks

Table 3.1 Chronology for the Indo-Iranian Borderlands (After Franke-Vogt 2008)

Years (in BC)	T. Yahya	Shahr-e Sokhta	Makran	Mundigak	Sohr Damb	Mehrgarh / Nausharo	Quetta
4,500			I ?			III	
4,000	V		gap ?				KGM III
3,500			II	I	L1 L2	IV	KGM IV / DS I
3,000	gap IV C	1.10-9	IIIa	III	gap	V	DS II
2,500	gap ? IV B.6-1	II	IIIb	IV.1 IV.2 IV.3	II.1-4	VI VII B VII C NS I D	DS III
		III	IIIc IV			NS II	Sadaat
	IV A	IV.1 IV.2		gap	IV	NS III	aband.
2,000	abandoned	aband.	aband.		aband.	NS IV	

there as “integrated within more general social configurations” (1986, 79) rather than economic arrangements. He based this interpretation on the closed and localized nature of exchange among eastern Iranian settlements and characterized material exchanges as based on “an idiom of local ritual behavior” (1986, 77).

In contrast to this interpretation for the early 3rd millennium BC, Possehl interpreted the interaction between the Kulli and the Indus Civilization in the second half of the 3rd millennium as a highland/lowland partnership in which the two cultures engaged in commercial relations with Mesopotamia. He referred to this alliance as a “symbiotic weave” that fostered a growth toward urbanization within the Kulli and the Indus (1986, 104). In this, Possehl was not implying an evolutionary sequence but a historically documented case of a different form of exchange. I will return to more recent research on the Iranian Plateau and the Kulli in a later section.

Before continuing with this discussion of material exchanges on the Iranian Plateau and the Kulli, we need to turn back and then move forward with respect to exchange theory and material culture studies. Shaffer (1978), Dales (1977), and Possehl (1986) each drew on Thomas

Harding's concept of "important wealth" (1967, 248) that is based on his research on exchange networks on the Vitiaz Strait in Melanesia. For Harding, important wealth referred to the exchange of objects because they formed "the currency of important social ritual" such as building rites, exchanges among affines, and bridewealth. Exchange networks supported the authority of *big men* who were the "focal agents of these social rituals" (1967, 248). In the Vitiaz Strait, exchange was not based on a hierarchically institutionalized economy. It involved a "vast interpersonal network," in which the value of objects was based on exchanges among small numbers of contacts that included kin groups and "kindreds of trade friends" (1967, 243), delayed reciprocity that sustained social relations when goods were temporarily unavailable, and the uneven distributions of natural resources that trading groups produced from them. It was these local social practices that defined how and with whom exchange took place and not "models derived from Western economic systems" (1967, vi).

Harding's work was guided by the substantivist approach espoused by Karl Polanyi (Polanyi *et al.* 1957), the principal aim of which was to establish the differences between preindustrial economies and modern ones. Exchanges in small-scale societies were considered primitive economic systems, while those associated with more complex societies were interpreted in modern economic terms as market economies. Polanyi adhered to the assumption that all societies have ways of structuring the provisioning of material goods and services (primitive economies), but that all were not subject to the "economizing rules of market exchange," such as a supply-demand-price mechanism. "Primitive and archaic systems" were a "by-product of kinship, political and religious obligation" (Dalton 1968, xii).

Possehl extended Harding's ideas beyond the interpersonal networks in the Vitiaz Strait to their significance in intertribal relations. Both Marshall Sahlins (1972) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969) had elaborated on this point. On this, Lévi-Strauss was explicit when speaking of Marcel Mauss's important concept of gift exchange; he explained that "exchanges are peacefully resolved wars, and wars are the result of unsuccessful transactions" (1969, 67). The worst thing was not to give gifts. All exchanges were deemed to be about reconciliation (Sahlins 1972).

Possehl interpreted the exchanges known from the published evidence on the Iranian Plateau as analogous to the case presented by Harding. Material distributions at Tepe Yahya, Shahr-i Sokhta, Shahdad, and Tall-I Iblis involved a limited number of products whose origins came from specific zones. Shahdad and Shahr-i Sokhta were large settlements comparable to urban centers elsewhere, and although Tepe Yahya and Tall-I Iblis were smaller, they were located on strategic overland routes. Much

as Harding had described for the Vitiaz Strait, the uneven distribution of resources was significant. Chlorite vessels had their origins at Tepe Yahya, where abundant chlorite sources and specialist local artisans were located. At Shahr-i Sokhta, objects made of lapis lazuli and turquoise, both thought to be from neighboring regions, were produced by local artisans judging by the raw lumps of lapis and production tools. Tall-I Iblis was a local metallurgical center. Moreover, at Shahr-i Sokhta, Tepe Yahya, and Shahdad, these exotic materials were removed from circulation and buried in graves. The divisions of resources and products and the limitations of the exchange to a closed system of small-scale polities were interpreted as "complementary reciprocity" (Possehl 1986, 73), not goal-directed behavior in the sense of a centralized system organized into market networks. On the archaeological side, their presence in burial contexts suggested a form of local distribution that was not formalized.

Another source was literary documents from ancient Mesopotamia in order to establish the nature of the exchange between the west and the east. Possehl introduced the tale of Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta, a well-known literary text in which a Sumerian king engaged in exchange with a lord in a distant land to the east of southern Iraq, possibly in south-central Iran (Madjidzadeh and Pittman 2008). Enmerkar was particularly eager to acquire lapis lazuli and metal, which most likely came from the two source areas known from the archaeological evidence at Shahr-i Sokhta and Tall-I Iblis. The tale in the chronicles spoke of a series of disastrous encounters in which the Lord of Aratta demanded that exchanges be "precisely reciprocal," a demand Possehl interpreted as inconsistent with a market economy. Both the archaeological and textual evidence suggested that exchanges between the two cultures were better interpreted as important wealth than the marketing networks proposed by others (cf. Lamberg-Karlovsky 1977).

In contrast to the early 3rd millennium BC and the evidence from the Iranian Plateau, Possehl saw exchanges among the Kulli during the second half of the 3rd millennium BC as different from what he had described for eastern Iran. This difference was based on the substantial shifts in social and economic factors that drove the movement of objects. Possehl did not dwell on Kulli exchanges before the second half of the 3rd millennium BC, but presumably he interpreted them in the same terms as those described for the Iranian Plateau as exchanges of important wealth among polities based on overlapping distributions of exotic commodities. He was explicit about changes that occurred mid-millennium when the Kulli engaged in active trading among several civilizations, including Mesopotamia, the Indus, and Dilmun (present-day Bahrain). Possehl again turned to textual sources, this time to documents that recorded products that were thought to come from Meluhha, most likely the

Indus Civilization (Possehl 1986). The presence of large quantities of copper recorded in shipments to Mesopotamia far exceeded levels of exchange in earlier periods. The exchanges recorded in these texts were direct, high volume, and businesslike (Possehl 1986). These transactions were based on a maritime trade that bypassed the Iranian Plateau.

The identification of Meluhha with the Indus Civilization has never been conceived as a bounded entity. The textual sources are silent on its exact location and based on the Kulli evidence, Possehl viewed the Kulli as part of a commercial network between the highlands of southern Balochistan and the lowlands on the Indus alluvial plain. His principal argument, and an advance over earlier discussions of the Kulli, placed them as “specialized partners” of the Harappans that together engaged in commercial relations to the west with Mesopotamia (Possehl 1986, 104).

The Commodity/Exchange Dichotomy Reconfigured

Leaving the Iranian Plateau and the Kulli aside for the moment, and as a segue to more recent observations on exchange theory, I discuss several influential books and papers that were published since the late 1980s. Several of the contributions to Arjun Appadurai’s, *The Social Life of Things* (1988), were written by Possehl’s colleagues in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania (Appadurai, Cassanelli, Davenport, Kopytoff, and Spooner; Nancy Farriss introduced the volume’s preface). The participants were historians and cultural anthropologists, and their papers were based on an ethnohistory program designed to explore “techniques of historical research” (1988, ix). Although Possehl was not a participant in the ethnohistory program, there may have been informal dialogues about exchange theory among Possehl and his colleagues, though their conclusions would necessarily be guided by different data sets.

Many topics addressed by Appadurai (1988) and his colleagues were focused on the circulation of “commodities,” gifts, and commodity exchanges. They argued that claims in which gifts and commodities were contrastive forms of exchange (1988, 11) were exaggerated in anthropological writing. They turned exchange theory in a different direction by offering an altered perspective on commodities. The bare bones of their approach, which is of specific relevance to this chapter, are the following. First, they rejected the evolutionary framework of the substantivists and the dichotomy between gifts and commodities. Uncoupled from this dichotomy, they focused instead on commodity exchange in cultural contexts. While economists define commodities based on their use and exchange value, which to some degree is fixed, from a cultural perspective

objects move in and out of systems of value. Their value in exchange is contingent upon a range of cultural factors over time, depending upon whether they are rendered as gifts or in the commodity form understood by modern economic theorists. As Igor Kopytoff argued, “the same thing can be treated as a commodity one time and not at another” (1988, 64). Second, of specific relevance here is the notion that “objects of economic value” have social lives (Appadurai 1988, 3). Appadurai used the term “regimes of value” to highlight his view that the “value” of a thing varied “from situation to situation and from commodity to commodity” (1988, 15) and was dependent on time, culture, and social factors. Viewed in this light, Kopytoff (1988, 68) spoke of “biographies” of objects as culturally constructed entities that were “classified and reclassified into culturally constituted categories” that were not necessarily economic ones.

One way in which Possehl may have influenced or have been influenced by his colleagues, perhaps in informal conversations around the department at the time that he was writing his book on the Kulli, was his emendation to his discussion of exchange theory. Much like Kopytoff’s view, he observed that the important wealth/commodity dichotomy he had asserted between the Iranian Plateau and the Kulli systems referred to two norms that may have operated on a “multidimensional continuum” (Possehl 1986, 79), thus, allowing for reclassifications in the status of objects and the presence of both forms of exchange. Additionally, Possehl distanced himself from the substantivists by avoiding any suggestion that any shift between the early and late 3rd millennium BC were evolutionary, such as the transition from a primitive economy to a commercialized one.

Similarly, the degree of interaction between Annette Weiner and the contributors to Appadurai’s seminar is uncertain. In a paper in *American Ethnologist*, she spoke of objects that had been exchanged “among individuals for years or even generations” (Weiner 1985, 211). This was an idea that she elaborated upon in *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping While Giving* (1992). There, she spoke of systems of value and moved scholarship forward by speaking to a different set of issues with respect to gifts and reciprocity and dealt directly with the processes by which objects gain cultural value. She argued that the power (or value) of the gift was not merely in “relation to the return it would elicit” (1992, 149), that is—reciprocity.

Weiner spent her early student years as an archaeologist and had a better sense of the significance of historical processes than many other anthropologists with respect to the circulation of goods. Her most perceptive commentary from the perspective of archaeology on the complexities of exchange, was in an interview in 1996 in which she spoke of “layers” of value (Myers 2001, 290), a concept that clearly

expresses the historical processes by which objects accrue value as they move in systems of exchange over time and space. Layers of value are the ideas that become attached to objects (Myers 2001). They are the result of histories, trajectories, beliefs, and stories surrounding the existence of the object exchanged. It is these “culturally constructed ideologies” that are the active forces that validate their absolute value (Weiner 1992, 150).

A seminar held at the School of American Research (now School for Advanced Research) and published in 2001, *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture*, elaborated on these ideas and provided examples of the processes by which objects come to be imbued with value. Appadurai (1988) and Weiner (1985, 1992) had already noted that anthropologists had exaggerated the differences between gifts and commodities and diverted attention from the ways in which objects acquire value. By speaking of objects as items of exchange using a “western economic and political reading of ‘gifts’ that linked them to reciprocity, authority and ownership” (Myers 2001, 5), anthropologists had failed to question how the objects themselves came to be invested with “socio-cultural meaning and value” (Myers 2001, 5; Weiner 1994) as the multiple layers of history, trajectory, belief, and stories become attached to an object and give it “density.” An object is not “really, really valuable until it has its own history, its own genealogy of famous lineages” (Myers Weiner, 2001, 291) that extends beyond its present owner. It is in this sense that objects have agency to a sufficient degree that their genealogies may influence how and to whom objects circulate. For example, in present-day contexts when alternative regimes of value, such as market economies, are introduced to communities, they may be rejected because they are perceived as threatening to social cohesion (Keane 2001).

These new examinations of objects of exchange and systems of value have significantly altered the basic premises of the substantivist approach. The division of exchange into reciprocal giving and market economies now appears overly simplified when cast against Weiner’s conception of the multiple layers of history that are embedded in objects of exchange. Admittedly, uncovering these layers in archaeological contexts is not easy. On the other hand, we can no longer accept a step-like transition from small-scale exchanges to market economies or even the reverse. In the following section, I suggest some ways in which the Kulli provides an example that lends itself to a more complex interpretation of changes that occurred between the early and mid-3rd millennium BC. They include a refined chronology (Table 3.2) and new interpretations of exchanges in which the Kulli were involved.

Table 3.2 Chronology for the Indus Civilization[†]

*Ravi/Hakra –	3500–2800 BC
Early Harappan/Kot Diji	2800–2600 BC
Urban/Mature Harappan	2600–1900 BC
A-2600–2450	
B-2450–2200	
C-2200–1900	
**Post-Urban/Late Harappan	1900–1700 BC

[†]This chronology is based on the excavations at Harappa (Meadow *et al.* 2001)

*The Ravi/Hakra falls outside of the time period discussed here.

**The Late Harappan may continue as late as 1300 BC in some locations (Possehl 2005)

New Chronologies and Interpretations: The Kulli, Iranian Plateau, Pakistani Balochistan, and the Indus

Our understanding of cultural interaction in the first half of the 3rd millennium BC has changed since 1986. First, recent discoveries have documented the existence of more widespread contacts than were previously known. In parts of northern Balochistan at Mehrgarh and Nausharo, there are many overlapping ceramic styles comparable to those in the Indus and in southern Balochistan (Franke-Vogt 2008; Wright 2002, 2010) that are indicative of contact. In the northeastern part of the Iranian Plateau at Shahr-i Sokhta, studies of a range of artifacts also show broad zones of contact involving the Indus, northern and southern Pakistani Balochistan, and the south-central Iranian Plateau (Cortesi *et al.* 2008). The new discoveries at Konar Sandal South in south-central Iran also demonstrate contact between the Iranian Plateau and southern Balochistan (Madjidzadeh and Pittman 2008; Wright n. d.). Finally, an intensive study of ceramic assemblages from the site of Nindowari and Mehi in southern Balochistan has refined the chronology for these sites and Bampur on the Iranian Plateau (Jarrige and Quivron 2008; Jarrige *et al.* 2011; Quivron 2008). Second, careful studies of ceramic vessels and distributional evidence suggests that ceramics carried “highly symbolic” meanings and traveled in fluid and shifting contexts in which some ceramic styles appeared and others disappeared (Franke-Vogt 2008, 669).

These new discoveries and reinterpretations of existing evidence indicate that in the second half of the 3rd millennium BC, cultural contact continued throughout the region. In northern Balochistan, Indus ceramic assemblages are more prevalent. At Nausharo, for example, the ceramic exchanges from the preceding period continue, but by

mid-millennium, the site includes a full-scale gridded settlement and a ceramic corpus emblematic of Indus centers on the alluvial plains. Sporadic contacts with settlements in southern Pakistani Balochistan, including the Kulli, continued. At Shahr-i Sokhta, studies of terracotta cakes and shell and ivory for inlays and gaming pieces that are typical of Indus assemblages now show that they were not trade items but were locally produced copies of Indus materials produced from technologies that had diffused to the region. This diffusion of ceramic technologies was established based on an earlier study (Wright 1985, 1989, 1991) of grey wares, but here it is extended to other technologies (Cortesi *et al.* 2008). Rather than items of exchange, Cortesi and her colleagues (2008, 29–30) propose that contacts between Shahr-i Sokhta and the Indus were *not* based on “large-scale trade, centralization of trading networks or centrally managed entrepreneurship” but on technology transfers, “sporadic trade contacts, individual trips, or marriages rather than systematic, specialized forms of long-distance trade,” possibly among the elites at Shahr-i Sokhta and the Indus.

In south-central Iran at Konar Sandal South, cultural contact continued with southern Pakistani Balochistan and extended as far east as the Indus. The presence of a number of small finds suggests this possibility. They are a square bronze seal depicting a gharial and caprid comparable to others at Lothal (Pittman 2008, 94) and a steatite stamp seal with a reclining caprid that is stylistically similar to one at Mohenjo-daro. Spherical weights (not truncated) and a single cubical weight may also extend contact as far as the Indus (Pittman 2008; Wright n. d.). Similar spherical stone objects, (Jarrige and Quivron 2008; Jarrige *et al.* 2011), referred to as tokens, found on the surface in northern Balochistan near the site of Mehrgarh, need additional examination but may indicate contacts between the Jiroft and northern Balochistan. Similarly, a potsherd found at a site near Nausharo bears a stamped eagle (Jarrige and Quivron 2008; Jarrige *et al.* 2011), which would appear to have strong connections to the Jiroft, where depictions of this raptor are a common theme on soft stone vessels.

There is greater chronological precision for contacts between Kulli and non-Kulli sites in southern Balochistan based on an intensive study of ceramic assemblages from Nindowari (Jarrige and Quivron 2008; Jarrige *et al.* 2011; Quivron 2008) and new evidence from Miri Qalat (Besenval 1997a, 1997b), and Mehi (Jarrige and Quivron 2008; Jarrige *et al.* 2011; Quivron 2008). In addition, the results of the excavations at Nausharo (Jarrige C, 1997; Jarrige, J. -F. 1994) and Harappa are providing stratigraphic evidence with which to secure this chronology. Based on these new data, there now is strong evidence that the Kulli developed indigenously. Though bounded by the Indus on its east and the Bampur tradition on the Iranian

Plateau, the Kulli maintained many original features straight through to the early 2nd millennium BC. Jarrige and Quivron suggest that we need to now discard the earlier conception of a “progressive geographic expansion” from the Indus. They regard it as a “complete misconception to interpret the Kulli culture as a composite culture mixing some local surviving traditions with a strong Indus cultural component” (Jarrige and Quivron 2008, 63; Jarrige *et al.* 2011).

The following is a brief outline of the new Kulli chronology and the basis of their interpretation. The finds at Miri Qalat (Besenval 1997a, 1997b, 2000) show a mixed assemblage that includes local types and ceramics comparable to those found in the Indus, Kulli, and Iranian Plateau. Although they did not discuss the evidence from the Jiroft, similar connections are apparent there. Jarrige and Quivron interpret Miri Qalat, along with Sutkagen Dor and Sotka Koh as “true Indus settlements” (Jarrige and Quivron 2008, 63; Jarrige *et al.* 2011) that were founded early in the Indus sequence (2800–2450 BC). In between the Indus and these sites, there were Kulli settlements.

They divide the Kulli sequence into two periods, the Early Kulli and the Late Kulli-Mehi. The Early Kulli is contemporary with the Early Harappan period and the first period of the Mature Harappan A; the Late Kulli-Mehi extends to 1900 BC (Mature Harappan B and C). These divisions are based upon stylistic criteria and renderings of certain animals, especially humped cattle, felines, and rows of caprids; plant designs such as pipals and tree-like motifs; and a variety of geometric patterns (Quivron 2008). The most characteristic vessel shape is a distinctive canister jar that has long been associated with the Kulli. There are very few links to the Indus in the Early Kulli. At Mehi, dated to the Late Kulli-Mehi, many decorative styles continue, but there are significant differences. These differences include decorative styles and vessel shapes that are comparable to Harappan ceramics. Some examples include the dish-on-stand and goblets associated with the second and third phases of the Mature Harappan B and C (Quivron 2008, 48).

The settlement at Nindowari is approximately 25ha and includes several substantial platform constructions and buildings. Although there are other large Kulli settlements, which have been identified in southern Balochistan by Franke-Vogt (possibly as large as 50ha in the Las Bela region to the south, see Franke-Vogt and ul-Haq 2008), Nindowari is the only large settlement that has been extensively excavated. The evidence from the lower levels at Nindowari is less well-developed than later ones; but in any event, what is available appears to fall within the Kulli category. For example, a painted pot sherd depicting a bull motif compares with a similar rendering from an early level at the site

of Balakot, thus, placing the original occupation of the site in the Early Harappan, which falls within the Kulli time period.

The final occupation at Nindowari falls within the Kulli-Mehi period (Jarrige and Quivron 2008; Jarrige *et al.* 2011) in which the ceramic styles continue to show connections to the Iranian Plateau. Therefore, they also refer to this time period as Kulli-Mehi-Bampur based on the continued depictions of rows of caprids known from the site of Bampur on the Iranian Plateau (Jarrige and Quivron 2008; Jarrige *et al.* 2011). Caprids set in rows are now known from Konar Sandal South in the Jiroft (Madjidzadeh 2008; Wright n. d.). Pipal motifs are consistently represented throughout the same region. The Kulli-Mehi-Bampur styles were maintained until the beginning of the 2nd millennium and are present as far north as Nausharo in northern Balochistan, the Iranian Plateau at Shahr-i Sokhta, and possibly at Mohenjo-daro.

Discussion

This new evidence seriously alters some of what was known in 1986. First, we can no longer assume that after the middle of the 3rd millennium BC, trade to the west (and Mesopotamia) bypassed the Iranian Plateau. The continued development of exchanges between northern and southern Balochistan with the south-central Iranian Plateau (Bampur and the Jiroft) as well as the Indus throughout the 3rd millennium BC requires a reevaluation of the extent to which overland routes to the west continued after 2500 BC. Second, Jarrige and his colleagues (Jarrige and Quivron 2008; Jarrige *et al.* 2011) have established the continuity of the Kulli from an early period and the later planning of major settlements that were obviously interrelated with a wide array of inter-Iranian exchange events (Jarrige and Quivron 2008). They do not address the circumstances or the processes in which these interactions took place, but they note the strong symbolic element to the exchanges. Similarly, they refrain from a discussion of whether the exchanges were based on social or economic factors. Although, underlying their emphases on the indigenous development of the Kulli, the large number of sites associated with it, the platform and construction at Nindowari, and the continuity of the Kulli-Mehi-Bampur tradition, they clearly regard the Kulli as an entity in its own right. Whether they would support the idea that the Kulli were “specialized partners of the Harappans” (Possehl 1986, 104) is not addressed.

Finally, I return to Weiner’s conception of the biography of objects and their layered or dense genealogies. The evidence presented here is largely dependent upon ceramics and a limited number of small finds on

which plant and animal motifs were rendered. I believe it is convincing to propose that these renderings are the stuff of the genealogical layering and densities that Weiner put forward. Rich in their detail as they traveled through networks of exchange over a vast area, the pipal, caprids, bulls, felines, and trees clearly conveyed meanings to those who possessed them or passed them along to others. From this, I propose that their genealogies (individuals, cultures near and far) and those who received and gave did so based on rationales that cannot be grasped founded on economics alone. Much as Keane (2001) has suggested, the shifts in the circumstances of exchange most likely did not come easily, and rationales for change were contested.

Conclusion

When considering third-millennium Indo-Iran (inclusive of Iranian and Pakistani Balochistan and the Indus), the contacts among cultures indicate that the nature of interaction was diverse and constantly in flux. Some of the interpretations proposed by Possehl have held up to the current evidence. It is clear that the established connections in the first half of the 3rd millennium were not based on the control of any single group. They involved small-scale exchanges that carried symbolic meanings. The new artifact studies at Shahr-i Sokhta and established connections among Iranian and southern Pakistani Balochistan and the Indus (Franke-Vogt 2008; Wright 1989) fall within that category. To this should be added the implications of technologies and the face-to-face encounters implied by their transmission (Wright 2002).

The shift to more intensified and broad-ranging exchange systems proposed by Possehl need now to be expanded to include the involvement of the Indus, Kulli, Jiroft, and northern and southern Balochistan more generally. When all of the evidence is considered, the interpretations of these data demonstrate that there was not a smooth transition from one stage or form of contact to another. The evidence from Shahr-i Sokhta and the continued links between Iranian and southern Pakistani Balochistan discount this possibility and suggest that noncommercialized exchanges continued in the second half of the 3rd millennium BC in parts of Balochistan, some of which existed side-by-side with institutionalized, commercial forms. The layered genealogies that accrued over a thousand-year period that began early in the 3rd millennium and continued to its end in the early 2nd clearly presented a hold on the manner in which circulation of exchanges took place.

Possehl paved a way toward understanding the social processes involved in third-millennium exchanges among the Kulli and others. His thoughts on the shifts to commercialized trade are now providing us

ways with which to situate the complex and widespread connections that persisted in the early 3rd millennium BC and in some locations into the second half in which it now seems clear that important wealth continued to circulate along with more directed trade.

Acknowledgments

Greg Possehl was one of the major archaeologists to conduct research on the Indus Civilization. He was a generous colleague, and his contributions were many. We have lost a major advocate for our work and for South Asia studies. My thanks also go to three reviewers who commented on this chapter.

Note

1. I have not included a discussion of contact with the Arabian Peninsula, which can be found in Potts (2009). However, based on a study employing Neutron Activation Analysis, some of the ceramics discovered on the Arabian Peninsula were produced in Iranian Balochistan (Blackman *et al.* 1989). Central Asian connections also are known but are not discussed here.

References

- Appadurai, A., (ed.), 1988. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Besenal, R. 1997a. The chronology of ancient occupation in Makran: Results of the 1994 season at Miri Qalat (Pakistani Makran). In R. Allchin and B. Allchin (eds.), *South Asian Archaeology 1995*, 199–216. New Delhi, Oxford and IBH Publishing Co.
- . 1997b. Entre le Sud-Est Iranien et la plaine de l'Indus: le Kech-Makran; Recherches archéologiques sur le peuplement ancien d'une marche des confins Indo-Iraniens. *Arts Asiatiques* 52: 5–36.
- . 2000. New data for the chronology of the protohistory of Kech-Makran (Pakistan) from Miri Qalat 1996 and Shahi-Tump 1997 field seasons. In M. Taddei and G. De Marco (eds.), *South Asian Archaeology 1997*, 161–87. Rome, ISIAO.
- . 2005. Chronology of Kech-Makran. In C. Jarrige (ed.) *South Asian Archaeology 2001*, 1–9. Paris, ADPF Editions Recherches sur les Civilisations.
- Blackman, J., Mery, S., and Wright, R. P. 1989. Production and exchange of ceramics on the Oman Peninsula from the perspective of Hili. *Journal of Field Research* 16(1): 61–77.
- Cortesi, E., Tosi, M., Lazzari, A., and Vidale, M. 2008. Cultural relationships beyond the Iranian Plateau: The Helmand civilization, Balochistan and the Indus Valley in the 3rd millennium BCE. *Paleorient* 34(2): 5–35.
- Dales, G. F. 1977. Shifting trade patterns between the Iranian Plateau and the Indus Valley in the third millennium BC. *Le Plateau Iranien et L'Asie Centrale des Origines a la Conquete Islamique*, 567: 67–78. Colloques Internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique. Paris, CNRS.
- Dalton, G. 1968. *Primitive, Archaic, and Modern Economies: Essays of Karl Polanyi*. Boston, Beacon Press.
- Franke-Vogt, U. 2005. Excavations at Sohr Damb/Nal: Results of the 2002 and 2004 Seasons. In U. Franke-Vogt and H. -J. Weisshaar (eds.), *South Asian Archaeology 2003*, 63–76. Aachen, Linden Soft.
- . 2008. Balochistan and the Borderlands. In D. Pearsall (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Archaeology*, 651–70. New York, Academic Press.
- Franke-Vogt, U. and ul-Haq, S. 2008. Tracking the prehistory of southeastern Balochistan. In E. M. Raven (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 1999*, 30–46. Groningen, Egbert Forsten.
- Harding, T. G. 1967. *Voyagers of the Vitiaz Strait: A Study of a New Guinea Trade System*. Seattle, University of Washington Press.
- Jarrige, C. 1997. The figurines from Nausharo, period I and their further developments. In R. Allchin and B. Allchin (eds.), *South Asian Archaeology 1995*, 33–43. New Delhi, Oxford and IBH Publishing Co.
- Jarrige, C., Jarrige, J. -F., Meadow, R. H., and Quivron, G. eds. 1995. *Mehrgarh Field Reports 1975 to 1985—From the Neolithic to the Indus Civilization*. Karachi, Department of Culture and Tourism, Government of Sindh, and the French Foreign Ministry.
- Jarrige, J. -F. 1994. The final phase of the Indus occupation at Nausharo and its connection with the following cultural complex of Mehrgarh VIII. In A. Parpola and P. Koskikallio (eds.), *South Asian Archaeology 1995*, 295–313. Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedakatemia.
- Jarrige, J. -F. and Quivron, G. 2008. The Indus Valley and the Indo-Iranian borderlands. In E. M. Raven (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 1999*, 61–83. Groningen, Egbert Forsten.
- Jarrige, J. -F., Quivron, G., and Jarrige, C. 2011. *Nindowari—la Culture de Kulli: Ses Origines et ses Relations avec la Civilisation de l'Indus*. Paris, Gingko.
- Keane, W. 2001. Money is no object: Materiality, desire, and modernity in an Indonesian society. In F. Myers (ed.), *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture*, 65–90. Santa Fe, School of American Research.
- Kopytoff, I. 1988. The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process. In A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, 64–94. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Lamberg-Karlovsky, C. C. 1977. Foreign relations in the third millennium at Tepe Yahya. In *Le Plateau Iranien et l'Asie Centrale des Origines a la Conquete Islamique: Leurs Relations a la Lumiere des Documents Archéologiques*, 33–43. Paris, Colloques Internationaux du Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique.
- Levi-Strauss, C. 1969. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. London, Eyre and Spottiswoode.
- Madjidzadeh, Y. and Pittman, H. 2008. Excavations at Konar Sandal in the region of Jiroft in the Halil Basin: First Preliminary Report (2002–2008). *Iran* 46: 69–104.
- Myers, F. ed. 2001. *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture*. Santa Fe, School of American Research.
- Myers, F. and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. 2001. Art and material culture: A conversation with Annette Weiner. In F. Myers (ed.) *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture*, 269–314. Santa Fe, School of American Research.
- Piggott, S. 1950. *Prehistoric India to 1000 BC*. Baltimore, Penguin Books.
- Pittman, H. 2008. Excavations at Konar Sandal in the region of Jiroft in the Halil Basin: First preliminary report (2002–2008), the glyptic. *Iran*: 69–104.
- Polanyi, K., Arensberg, C. M., and Pearson, H. W. 1957. *Trade and Market in the Early Empires*. New York, Free Press.
- Possehl, G. 1986. *Kulli. An Exploration of an Ancient Civilization in South Asia*. Durham NC, Carolina Academic Press.
- Potts, D. T. 2009. The archaeology and early history of the Persian Gulf. In L. G. Potter (ed.), *The Persian Gulf in History*, 27–56. New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

- Quivron, G. 2008. New light on the Kulli culture. In E. M. Raven (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 1999*, 47–59. Groningen, Egbert Forsten.
- Sahlins, M. 1972. *Stone Age Economics*. Chicago, Aldine.
- Shaffer, J. G. 1978. *Prehistoric Balochistan*. Delhi, B. R. Publishing Corporation.
- Stein, Sir A. 1931. An archaeological tour in Gedrosia. *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India* 43.
- . 1937. *Archaeological Reconnaissances in Northwest India and Southeastern Iran*. London, Macmillan Co. Ltd.
- Steinkeller, P. 2006. New light on Marhasi and its contacts with Makkan and Babylon. *Journal of Magan Studies* 1: 1–17.
- Weiner, A. 1985. Inalienable wealth. *American Ethnologist* 12(2): 210–27.
- . 1992. *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping While Giving*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- . 1994. Cultural difference and the density of objects. *American Ethnologist* 21(2): 391–403.
- Wright, R. P. 1985. *Technology, Style and Craft Specialization: Spheres of Interaction and Exchange in the Indo-Iranian Borderlands, Third Millennium BC*. Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Michigan.
- . 1989. New tracks on ancient frontiers: Ceramic technology on the Indo-Iranian borderlands. In C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky (ed.), *Archaeological Thought in America*, 268–79. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- . 1991. Patterns of technology and the organization of production at Harappa. In R. Meadow (ed.), *Harappa Excavations 1986–1990. A Multidisciplinary Approach to Third Millennium Urbanism*, 71–88. Madison, Prehistory Press.
- . 2002. Revisiting interaction spheres: Social boundaries and technology on inner and outermost frontiers. *Iranica Antiqua* 37: 403–17.
- . 2010. *The Ancient Indus: Urbanism, Economy and Society*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- . In press. “The Jiroft in context—the Iranian Plateau, Balochistan and the Indus.” In: Y. Madjidzadeh (ed.), Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Iran.



New Evidence for Interaction between the Iranian Plateau and the Indus Valley: Seals and Sealings from Konar Sandal South

Holly Pittman

Awareness of strong interregional relations across the vast expanse of the ancient Near East during the 3rd millennium BC has been with us since the discovery of the Harappan Civilization almost a century ago. Harappan connections with Mesopotamia and Elam were immediately observed. Yet, it took many decades for scholars to grasp the extent and importance of the long-distance interaction and the processes that characterized the development of those early states. One of the earliest programmatic descriptions of this phenomenon characterized it as the Age of Exchange (Amiet 1986). Some years later, the notion of the *Middle Asian Interaction Sphere* (MAIS) (Possehl 2002) was productively applied to illuminate this era. Both constructs have been useful in our ongoing attempts to build an understanding of complex relations between long-distant neighbors during the Bronze Age.

Two types of evidence are available to document the nature and detail of this interaction. One is the cuneiform texts that record military and economic interaction from the Mesopotamian point of view. The other is the material culture from controlled archaeological contexts that can be analyzed to reveal nontextual evidence for interaction. Both have been admirably summarized in several studies (Amiet 1986; Possehl 2002; Potts 1994; Ratnagar 2004). Even in its totality, the evidence for this interaction is woefully thin and only provides a glimpse into what we know was a cosmopolitan era during which people from all quarters of the immense Middle Asian landmass were

Connections and Complexity: New Approaches to the Archaeology of South Asia, edited by S. A. Abraham, P. Gullapalli, T. P. Raczek, and U. Z. Rizvi, 63–89. ©2013 Left Coast Press. All rights reserved.