

# Harappa Excavations 1986-1990

A Multidisciplinary Approach to  
Third Millennium Urbanism

Edited by Richard H. Meadow

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# Preface

**I**nterim or preliminary reports in archaeology occupy a particular place. They reflect current thinking about a project—what the excavator(s) or analyst(s) believe has been accomplished and what they think remains to be done. In the short term, they serve as a means for specialist colleagues to judge accomplishments and identify shortcomings. For the long term, however, do they have any lasting value?

Interim reports are important historical documents. And with increasing specialization in the analysis of archaeological remains and materials, they may be the only place where a project is presented as a whole. They often reflect how work developed, why certain decisions were made about what to do and what to do next, and how understandings grew and changed over the course of fieldwork. They have an immediacy that final reports lack and thus are an integral part of the documentation of a site or project. If one wishes to understand the details of Sir Leonard Woolley's excavations at Ur in Mesopotamia, one must consult not only the final *Ur Excavations* volumes 2–10 (London and Philadelphia, 1934–1976), but the preliminary reports published during the years of excavation between 1922 and 1934 in the *Antiquaries Journal* (London) and the *Museum Bulletin* (Philadelphia). Indeed, for nearly half a century those articles provided the principal source of information on periods at the site that did not come to be finally published until the 1970s.

The situation is no different for Harappa. M.S. Vats published in 1940 a “final report” on the work carried out at the site between 1920 and 1934 (contemporary

with the work at Ur). Excavations carried out since then, if reported at all, are described only in preliminary reports (see Possehl, Chapter 2 in this volume). Vats and Sahni before him also published interim statements in the *Annual Reports of the Archaeological Survey of India* that are still of value today especially to those of us working at the site.

We, therefore, do not apologize to the reader that what lies before her or him is an interim report. Indeed it is more “interim” than we had expected. When we planned the symposium “The Archaeology of Urbanism at Harappa, Pakistan” for the 1991 meetings of the Society for American Archaeology, we thought we would have just completed our sixth season at Harappa. Instead international politics intervened, and we now hope that the sixth season will take place in the first quarter of 1992. Thus many of the articles in this volume are more preliminary than they would have been if we had been able to carry out the study of pottery, small finds, and paleobiological materials that had been planned for 1991. While all contributions were affected, those of George Dales (Ch. 5) and Rita Wright (Ch. 6) on the ceramics and Heather Miller (Ch. 9) on the paleoethnobotanical remains were more so than the others. Thus these authors have defined an orientation and provided a methodological or theoretical foundation for future work based on what had been accomplished to date. In contrast, the papers of the biological anthropologists (Hemphill, Lukacs, and Kennedy, Ch. 11) and the soil scientists (Amundson and Pendall, Ch. 3) are more finished statements, based on data sets that have

been in hand since the end of the third season. The articles of Kenoyer (Ch. 4), Meadow (Ch. 7), and Belcher (Ch. 8) fall between these extremes. Finally the contribution of Reddy (Ch. 10), although not dealing directly with Harappa, is included as her work is closely related to that of Miller (Ch. 9) who cites it on a number of occasions.

Chapters 12 and 13 are different than those that come before. Chapter 12 comprises a list of personnel of the Harappa project. The fact that it appears as a chapter in its own right is testimony to the importance of the contributions made by the individual participants. Not listed are the more than one hundred individual Pakistani workers without whose assistance the project would have been impossible. By the end of the fifth season many of these men had become more skilled at their individual tasks than any of their supervisors and, indeed, some had become supervisors themselves. On behalf of all of us, I wish here to express special thanks and appreciation to these our fellow archaeologists.

Chapter 13 is a redaction of the yearly reports submitted to the Department of Archaeology, Government of Pakistan, within six months after each field season. Versions that are more completely illustrated with figures depicting small finds and pottery can be found in issues of *Pakistan Archaeology* starting with volume 24 (1989). We thought, however, that it would be useful if the reports, in edited form, were all included here so that the interested reader could follow the course of the project over its life of five seasons to date. Also, these reports contain information that is not included in any of the other chapters. Thus the volume as a whole provides the reader with a comprehensive overview of what was accomplished from 1986 to 1990 by the University of California-Berkeley / Department of Archaeology Project at Harappa.

In editing this volume, I attempted to standardize some of the terminology. In particular, "Early Harappa phase," "Harappan phase," and "Late Harappa phase" are used throughout the book in the sense defined by Jim Shaffer in his contribution to *Chronologies in Old World Archaeology*, 3rd edition. Terms such as "pre-Harappan," "mature Harappan," "urban Harappan," and "post-urban Harappan" are not used except in historical context or where unavoidable.

George Dales, in Chapter 1, has provided acknowledgements to persons and institutions supporting the work at Harappa. Here I wish to credit individuals

assisting in the publication of this volume. All the authors were so incredibly prompt in providing their contributions and sending modifications in line with editorial comment that my article came to be the last to be completed. Mark Kenoyer helped in the initial stages of the editing and by comments at other points in the process. He also is the source of nearly all of the plans and sections, which is a great work in itself. Jay Knight and Carol Bracewell are delightful people with whom to work when publishing a manuscript quickly and in style; they also provided invaluable editorial assistance with Chapter 13.

Common to all contributions in this volume is an understanding that Harappa is an urban site and thus a complicated object of study requiring a multidisciplinary approach over a long period of time. This is neither a straightforward nor inexpensive task and is made the more difficult at Harappa by the brick-robbing that took place in the 19th century. Greatly to the credit of George Dales is that he planned from the beginning for a long-term project, assembled the required staff, and constructed the facilities necessary to house them in relative comfort and provide for them a well-designed and properly equipped place to work. This has promoted the general health and sanity of project personnel and permitted appropriate conservation techniques to be applied to finds that otherwise would have disintegrated because of high salt content. Indeed, George's insistence on staffing a well-equipped conservation laboratory with well-trained staff has made it a model field installation. His initial focus on cemetery excavations and the inclusion of a quartet of physical anthropologists will soon yield a remarkable pair of final volumes that promises to set a new standard for the study of human remains. In sum, the support and encouragement of the interests of all members of the staff by both George and Barbara Dales have been remarkable.

As far as this volume is concerned, with great generosity George Dales encouraged me to take on the task of editing it. He not only provided two contributions (Ch. 1 and Ch. 5) but prepared Chapter 13 in its initial form. He supplied many of the object illustrations (including the cover art) and all of the photographs. His most important contribution, however, continues to be the encouragement and assistance he provides for us to carry on with our studies of Harappan archaeology and of the archaeology of Harappa.

Richard H. Meadow  
Cambridge, 30 October 1991