
 BOOK REVIEWS

BRIDGET ALCHIN (ED.), South East Asian Archaeology 1981. University of Cambridge Oriental Publications. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984. 346 (+ix) pp. £35.00 (Hard). ISBN 0-521-25599-6.

Reviewed by Rima Hooja

The archaeological tradition inherited by modern South Asian archaeologists appears to be an amalgum of strong 'Wheelerian' influence and the 'New Archaeology', against a backdrop of other 19th and early 20th century developments.

There is, however, one important dictum from the text books that scholars of South Asian archaeology sometimes seem to ignore -- the rule regarding prompt publication! Thus, the publication of conference papers frequently becomes a way of keeping up with on-going projects, new discoveries, and complicated fieldwork results. This is true of the book under review here. However, at its current (hard cover) price, this is an expensive volume for the general reader with an interest in becoming a dilettante in South Asian archaeology.

South Asian Archaeology 1981 is a collection of 49 papers read at the Sixth International Conference of the Association of South Asian Archaeologists in Western Europe, held at Cambridge in 1981. As the dust-jacket informs the reader:

"Every two years an international conference...brings together scholars and specialists in the archaeology of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and neighbouring areas. Researchers report on new discoveries, progress in major field projects, laboratory studies, and the changing interpretation and understanding of the

archaeology, art history, and early history of the Indian sub-continent".

Predictably, the 49 papers cover a wide range of topics, from recent research on the Palaeolithic in north Pakistan (Rendell; Dennell), to a discussion of the history and socioeconomic conditions of a 14th century AD temple from the Vijayanagara Empire of south India (Filliozat), to a reassessment of Southeast Asian bronze kettledrums (von Dewall). Such an assorted selection of papers does not seem incongruous, since the volume is divided into eight sections.

The first section deals with issues relating to Pleistocene chronology and the Palaeolithic of the Potwar Plateau of Pakistan, which are relevant for dating similar deposits in other parts of Indian and Pakistan. The next four sections cover the sites of Mehrgarh, Shahr-i Sokhta, the Indus Valley, and other protohistoric sites. Papers related to the Early Historic and Buddhist period form the sixth section, followed by a section dealing with Medieval architecture and the Vijayanagara Project. The final section is a compilation of miscellaneous papers, including reports from areas adjacent to the Indian sub-continent, such as Thailand. All sections form almost complete units by themselves, even though each of these contains papers not concerned with its main theme.

A detailed discussion of the papers is, for obvious reasons, not practical in a review. It may be relevant, however, to present the gist in order to critically appraise the book and gauge the relevance of the contributions.

The first two papers in South

Asian Archaeology 1981 report on the Potwar Project, a collaboration between the British Archaeological Mission to Pakistan and the Pakistani Department of Archaeology. Rendell's "The Pleistocene Sequence in the Soan Valley, North Pakistan" is complemented by Dennell's survey of the palaeontological and archaeological evidence on hominids, which stresses the value of the evidence of early man found on the Potwar Plateau.

Section two deals with Mehrgarh, an important site in Baluchistan, Pakistan, which has added "...a new dimension to the prehistoric sequence of the Greater Indus area" (J-F Jarrige: p. 21). With the exception of Beatrice de Cardi's study, the other papers in this section are a continuation of earlier reports of the French Archaeological Mission to Pakistan and the Pakistani Department of Archaeology (South Asian Archaeology, 1975, 1977, 1979). The excavations at Mehrgarh have provided information concerning the antecedents of later Indus Valley and Baluchistani cultures from the end of the 4th and 3rd millennium BC.

Jarrige discusses the problems regarding the 'Chronology of the earlier periods of the Greater Indus as seen from Mehrgarh, Pakistan', thereby providing a framework for the other papers about the site. Constantini ('The beginning of agriculture in the Kachi Plain...') has studied the evidence for cultivated barley and wheat from the earliest levels of the 'aceramic Neolithic' (Period I) at Mehrgarh. Due to the conditions of preservation of charred vegetal remains, it appears that flotation and water-separation did not prove useful recovery techniques, and, thus, dry sieving and impressions of straw and grain on mud-bricks were relied upon.

The Mehrgarh excavations have enabled the researchers to chart

"...the course of animal utilization in one area of the Indus Valley over an extended period of time" (Meadows: 34). The 'flint industry of Mehrgarh', present throughout the site's occupation, is also a subject of discussion; while Santoni comments on how the fresh data from Mehrgarh, and Sibri have widened the zone of cultural interaction between northern Afghanistan, Central Asia and eastern Iran, and the Greater Indus Valley.

The final paper in the Mehrgarh section is de Cardi's review of her surveys in Baluchistan between 1948 and 1957, in the context of the sequence, spanning over 4000 years of occupation, obtained from Mehrgarh. Relying predominantly on surface collections, the author argues for a decline in site-occupation, from the 4th to the 2nd millennium B.C., with a majority of sites having apparently been abandoned from the mid 3rd millennium B.C. However, further excavation data is definitely required before such an inexplicable abandonment of sites can be confidently accepted.

The third section includes papers on different aspects of ceramic assemblages at Shahr-i Sokhta and related sites. Biscione comments on the 'Baluchistan presence in the ceramic assemblage of Period I at Shahr-i Sokhta'; Vidale on 'The Pear-shaped Beaker ...evolution of a ceramic morphotype during the third millennium B.C.'; Pracechia postulating procedures for a 'Preliminary analysis of the Shahr-i Sokhta II Buff ware painted figuration...'; and Nalesini discussing the 'Social implications of the morphological variability of the decorated motifs of Shahr-i Sokhta Buff ware...'. In one of the other three papers of this section, Mariani (Craftsmen's quarters in the proto-urban settlements of the Middle East...) deals with the occurrence of industrial waste, from lithic, metal and

semi-precious stone, shell, craft industries, postulating which kind of activity can be recognised at a site, and to what extent it can be considered to be a fair reflection of the economic life of its occupants. Fiandra and Feroli provide a dual analysis of clay sealings, a constant element in the early state societies of several regions, in order to review protohistoric administrative procedures. They have tried to use a morphological-functional, and a typographical-distributional study.

The next group of papers consider various aspects of the 'Indus Valley Civilization', also referred to as the 'Harappan Civilization'. Catherine Jarrige discusses the 'Terracotta human figurines from Nindowari', a third millennium B.C. site in Baluchistan. Jansen presents the 'Preliminary results from two years' documentation in Mohenjo-daro', on behalf of the German Research Project Mohenjo-daro. Puskas attempts to understand the 'Society and religion in the Indus Valley civilization' and its influence on later Indian beliefs and systems. Grigson ('Some thoughts on unicorns and other cattle depicted at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa'), discusses the cattle commonly depicted on Harappan seals. Fairervis joins the legions who have attempted to read meaning from the hitherto undeciphered Indus script ('Harappan Civilization according to its writing'). Fairervis' interpretation that the Harappan language was an "...early Dravidian tongue not necessarily that of the proto-Dravidian reconstructs of modern Dravidians", with probable Indo-Aryan loan words, is by no means the only reading (!) of the Indus script, and considerable literature has been published recently, indicating the controversial nature of the issue.

Of the remaining four contributions to the Indus section, three

study different aspects of Harappan/non-Harappan contacts. Francfort, for instance looks at the relationship of Shortughai "...not with the Harappan world -- which is well attested -- but with the west, with Bactria and Turkmenia" (p. 170). Parpola focusses on the relationship between Harappan and Near Eastern art with special reference to the proto-Elamites, and Weisberger third millennium BC copper production in Oman. The latter sets out the "...archaeological evidence for the connections between the Makan/Oman peninsula and Sumer, Dilmun, Bahrain and especially Meluhha/Indus Valley" (p. 196) during the third millennium B.C.

The fifth section of South Asian Archaeology 1981, is a section on protohistory. Stacul summarises the results from the various excavations carried out in the Swat Valley (Pakistan) by the Italian Archaeological Mission at sites like Loebanr, Bir-kot-ghundhai and Chalgai. These have produced data on the cultural change that occurred in the Swat region between the third and mid second millennium B.C., and seem to show that the Swat Valley sites are not an "...isolated episode of marginality, but...part of a wider cultural context" (p. 210).

Miller's re-appraisal of the central Indian chalcolithic 'cultures', with reference to the terminology and classificatory systems used to distinguish between 'Malwa ware' and 'Jorwe ware' sites ('Malwa' and 'Jorwe' in the chalcolithic of India'), provides a fresh, and, in the context of developing suitable theoretical approaches, relevant interpretation.

Papers relating to Early Historic and Buddhist and numismatic archaeology have been grouped into the sixth section of the book. Irwin discusses pre-

Asokan pillars ('The Lat Bhairo of Benares; another pre-Asokan monument?'). Cribb considers Kushan coins and the 'the origin of the Buddha image...'. Van Lohuizen de Leeuw focusses on an ivory object found at Mantari, Sri Lanka ('A unique piece of ivory carving - the oldest known chessman'). Fischer, Sherrier and Verardi consider aspects of Gandharan art; while Taddei looks at 'Evidence of a fire cult at Tapa Sardar, Ghazni (Afghanistan)'; Baker, Melikian-Chirvani discusses 'Buddhist ritual in the literature of early Islamic Iran'; Franz looks at the 'Origins of the tower-temple in India'; and Lawson considers a group of Indian Buddhist terracotta sealings.

There are three articles in the penultimate section of the book -- Dumarcay's 'Perspective effects in the Airavatesvara temple, Darsuram'; John Fritz and George Mitchell's progress report of the Vijayanagara documentation and research project; and Filliozat's paper on a Vijayanagara temple. The final seven papers have been classified under the subtitle of Miscellaneous and Adjacent areas. The scope and spatial and temporal context of these range from "...pre-Mughal monuments in Bangladesh" (Ahmed), to 'The cemetery of Ban Don Ta Phet, Thailand...' (Glover et al.), Antonini's 'Planning a campaign in Nepal' and Clason's review of data relating to 'Animal-man relationships in southern Asia during the Holocene'.

The book is a useful directory of recent and on-going work. The incorporation of reports from British, French and Italian Archaeological Missions, the German Research Project, Mohenjo-daro, and the Vijayanagara Project, along with other research results, make South Asian Archaeology 1981 a source book for certain data. Some of the presentations (for example, Miller's 'Malwa' and 'Jorwe' in the chalcolithic of India', pp 213-

219) reflect a new trend in the theory and application of archaeological research on the subcontinent. The four papers on pottery from Shahr-i Sokhta go beyond the old system of classifying data only on the basis of typology, while reiterating the traditional importance of pottery for archaeological studies. The papers on Mehrgarh indicate the importance of the research being undertaken in that region. Until such time as the publication of complete reports for some of the areas covered in the book, works like South Asian Archaeology 1981 will be useful. However, at its present (hard back) price, the book is expensive for the general reader interested in becoming a dilettante in South Asian Archaeology.

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HENRY CLEERE (ED.), Approaches to the Archaeological Heritage: a Comparative Study of World Cultural Resource Management Systems. New Directions in Archaeology series. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984. 138 pp. £22.50 (Hard) ISBN 0-521-24305-X.

Reviewed by Christopher Chippindale.

Some of the Cambridge new directions for archaeology have been so odd, that it is refreshing to find this book sensible in its ambitions and practical in its approach. If it ends up on the pedestrian side, that may be the right fault.

At £22.50 for 138 pages, or around 16p a page, the book is even more of an incentive to pirate photocopies than usual, but the large format gives 1100 words a page, so the book is nothing like as thin as it appears. It has an introductory essay by William Lipe on value and meaning in cultural resources, and a closing essay by Henry Cleere on problems and perspectives; between these are twelve