CHAPTER VI

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One of the outcome of the present analysis of the pottery of Kuntasi is the confirmation of high standardization for making each variety of vessel. The ratio of Body Diameter/Internal Height for the complete vessels from various trenches revealed distinct clustering of at least four to five main groups of Jar, Jar/Pot, Bowl, Bowl/Dish, Dish, etc., and a number of varieties of several sizes within each group (Fig. 7). Each vessel is standardized to such an extent, that the ratios of diameter and thickness of wall, or diameter and width of rim, etc., are as if they have been fixed strictly. In other words, precise proportion of the vessel is maintained irrespective of the size in a particular variety. In some cases, variation is confined to only a few millimetres.

The use and precise control of the wheel or what can be described as craftsmanship of the potter must have been a crucial factor behind such practice. Such standardization is not necessarily based on some measuring instruments but "practical experience and accepted cultural traditions" (Dales and Kenoyer 1986: 68) which must have been maintained at least for several hundred years of occupation at the site. One observation on modern potters in Northern India by Kenoyer shows that range in variation of rim sizes made by one potter is about 10% (ibid.), or referring to Miller who worked on another village in Madhya Pradesh, variation among a number of potter is limited to around ±1 cm for a particular vessel with an average diameter of 7 cm (i.e. either
larger or smaller than average by around 15% (Miller 1985: 40-45).

The present samples from the Index Trench of Kuntasi also showed the ratios of diameter and thickness of wall or diameter and width of rim, etc., maintained meticulously. However, on the contrary, when the rim diameter alone (and not the ratios) is considered, the range of variation is found to be rather large, sometimes as large as ± 5 cm, especially in the case of Jar/Pots or Bowl/Dish (Figs. 22 and 39). The simple explanation for this could be that these groups actually include two categories of Jar and Pots, but their internal height could not be measured which would determine the ratio for the criteria. On the other hand, if more data is carefully examined, it may be possible to assign large range of variation to more than one potter (Miller 1985: 40-45). When so much effort (or skill) is spent for persisting the proportion of vessels (ratio of height and thickness, etc.), diameter should have also been standardized with the same care. On this account, it is possible that the variation among different potter is larger than the variation among the vessels made by one potter (ibid.). More data in the future may give clues to such views.

Whatever be the case, there is no doubt that the same set of vessels with the same variety of sizes and proportions were being made and used for over several generations at Kuntasi. There seems to be no significant change in the frequency of each variety, except for a few. Ethnographic studies of modern potters have demonstrated that "potters absorb influences from many sources and
learn from many individuals”, who should be “viewed as active transmitters of their craft” (Sinopoli 1993: 4). At least the ancient potters of Kuntasi seem to contradict such a view.

Few changes, such as an increase in the large variety of Jar/Pots (variety C) having the rim diameter of around 20 to 30 cm or more (thus with thick walls) in both Fine and Coarse wares can be noted (Figs. 22 and 46). The same trend is observed at Rojdi in Phase C (Possehl and Herman 1990: 309), and perhaps also at various other sites. This may be due to the increase in the demand for storage purposes. At Rojdi, this is associated with new vessel forms such as ‘S’ shaped (convex-concave) bowls, medium sized pots with long neck and the “Saurashtra lamps” which are also the common features of Rangpur IIC (which continues in III; Rao 1963).

It is possible, to some extent, to broadly divide the pottery sequence of Kuntasi into two phases on the basis of presence and absence of some varieties, relative increase in the number of vessels, as well as on some of the painted designs. The “first” phase can be assigned to layers 18 to 10, and the “second” phase to layers 9 to 1. This does not exactly correspond with the three structural phases. The observation on structures may indicate economic decline (Dhavalikar 1991a; 1992; 1993), but it is extremely interesting that such situation of the site do not seem to affect the pottery manufacturing activities. Vessels of some large variety or some new painted designs may occur, but broadly speaking, there is hardly any change in the shape, quality or in
the whole assemblage of pottery. Even the size is meticulously maintained throughout the occupation at the site. There seems to be no specific deterioration in the fabric or slip. Although the increase in the number of pottery from the upper layers of the Index Trench can be explained in various ways (activity area, clustering, etc.), at least it indicates that there was still a demand for the same pottery.

In terms of comparison with the UM categories and varieties, the number of equivalents found at Kuntasi (17 or 18 out of 77) is more or less the same as that of Rangpur IIA, Nageswar (both a and b), or Surkotada IA and IB. Though the frequency of each variety may have been different (exact data not available for all the sites), around 17 varieties of vessels as a set, is identical among all the three sites.

On the other hand, the site of Rojdi which can be considered as the type site of the "Sorath Harappan", poses some problem for the comparison with the UM varieties. The number of UM varieties found among Rojdi pottery (Possel and Herman 1990: 314) seem to be rather large even when they are comparing with the original set of 96 to 98 UM varieties instead of 77 applied in the present text. They have mentioned that in Rojdi A, B and C, the number of vessel forms shared with Mohenjo Daro is 16, 20 and 26 respectively, whereas only 6 to 7 varieties can be identified among the published drawings in the report. An observation of figures and tables (Herman 1989: 57-140, 141-156) suggest that nearly all the representative forms are being drawn. But the report on Rojdi
pottery is merely an “initial statement” (Herman 1989: 53), and more detailed version is awaited.

Judging from the published material, Rojdi has considerably low number of UM equivalents, which is only 6 or 7. The number of such equivalents noted at Rojdi as well as the set of varieties represented among them, is only comparable with Rangpur IIIB, IIC and III (the last phase is of course characterized by the Lustrous Red ware, but the basic component or the set of vessels comparable with the UM varieties clearly shows that it is an “extension” of IIIB or IIC). If the situation of both the sites (but perhaps excluding Rrangpur IIIA) can be considered as typical “Sorath Harappan”, then the “Sorath Harappan” lacks “classic goblet, beaker, ‘S’ shaped jar, and the tea cup with a perforated handle” (Possehl and Herman 1990: 312), but also almost 90% of the varieties of the UM classification.

In contrast to “Sorath Harappan” sites, the number of UM equivalents in the late A levels of Lothal is exceptionally large (43 out of 77). Although many of the other 55 “Sindhi Harappan” sites (Possehl 1993a) are still unexcavated or unsufficiently reported, perhaps Lothal remain as the only site, perhaps besides Dholavira, with such high number of UM variety equivalents. Elaborate painted designs are also definitely of Indus style, and considering also of other distinct material such as seals, chert blades, burials, etc., the site is no doubt of the “Sindhi Harappan”.

Another point to be noted in case of Lothal is rapid decrease
of the UM equivalents in the second half of the occupation, or Lothal B. Such sudden fall is attested only at Rangpur, whereas at other sites, the number of UM equivalents stay almost constant or even a increase slightly. This is observed at Surkotada (IC). Unless there is no bias in the selection of the material, the fluctuation in the number of UM equivalents do seem to reflect the economic condition of the site in contrast with Kuntasi. However, the prosperity of the site was only for a brief period, which may be the case also at Rangpur.

Although Lothal B retains some of the typical Indus or “Sindhi Harappan” painted designs, the low frequency of the the UM equivalents give an overall impression of being “Sorath Harappan”. Possehl has thus designated Lothal B as the “Late Sorath Harappan” (Possehl 1993a). Other than Lothal, Possehl mentions only four sites which undergo such change from “Sindhi” to “Sorath Harappan” (other sites being Nagwada-1, Pabumath, Samagogha and Koth, the first three in Kutch; Possehl 1993a).

On the other hand, “Sindhi Harappan” of Gujarat and “Sindhi Harappan” of Sind proper is clearly different in their material assemblage. Among the sites in Gujarat, Harappan wares are always associated with Coarse wares or other ‘non-Harappan’ wares and also occurrence of vessel forms uncommon in Sind represented by hemispherical bowl (Bowl A of Kuntasi). The latter is even found also at Dholavira (Joshi 1990: 411-413). Thus, there is always some indigenous element in all the sites in Gujarat including Kutch. Practice of applying slip to the majority of vessels seen at
Surkotada (Joshi 1990: 69, 77) or Nageswar (Bhan et al. 1990) also differ from Mohenjo Daro (where only the minority is being slipped), though both are considered as the "Sindhi Harappan" sites.

As far as the Indus painted style is concerned, it is important to note that the two phases at Nageswar are recognized on the basis of the presence/absence of the intricate geometric and abstract motifs. Besides this, there is no fundamental change between phases a and b. Such tendency is in fact already observed at Mohenjo Daro, where "in general, the Phase B has a simpler repertoire than Phase A" (Dales and Kenoyer 1986: 49), and the zoomorphic motifs and the very intricate patterns of Phase A are conspicuous by their absence. More or less similar to Surkotada, the number of UM varieties of both the phases of Nageswar remains the same (15 out of 77 UM varieties). On the other hand, certain aspects such as the application of slip on the majority of pottery, and the use of 'non-Harappan' Coarse ware (though constituting only around 15%) can be taken as the elements confined to Gujarat as also seen at Kuntasi, Lothal, Surkotada, etc.

The present analysis was an attempt to compare and correlate the UM categorization with the major sites in Gujarat, relying heavily on morphological features of vessels. The data also had to be confined to rim sherds. Yet, it was somehow sufficient to confirm the basic characteristics of each site in relation to number of UM varieties.
Obviously what has been revealed is only one part of many other facets, and hence it is far from conclusive. The comparison was also one-sided, based only on the UM categorization. These points have to be supplemented as a next step. Especially the vessels that do not come under the UM categorization have to be incorporated in some way. This concerns with the new forms found not only in the Harappan wares, but also among the so-called 'non-Harappan' wares such as Black-and-Red ware or the Micaceous Red ware, etc.

The UM categorization which is based on the pottery from Mohenjo Daro needs to be considered sites such as Chnahu Daro, Amri, Kot Diji, etc.

It is also worth to attempt to take various measurements, including rim diameters of each vessel directly from the published drawings. This would most probably support and collaborate the present work and enable to find out intra-site differences or similarities.

The comparison of painted designs is obviously another necessary procedure which has been rather deliberately omitted from the present work. In the present text, it has to be admitted that the phrases such as 'typical Indus painting designs/motifs' are used in very conventional way without any strict definition. It is not certain yet, but it seems that the changes in the painted designs drawn on pottery do not necessarily correlate with the change in the pottery forms. Therefore, an analysis of the painted designs needs comprehensive, but separate study.
Only after such steps we will be provided with some information to discuss about the actual process or the internal cultural developments. The nature and characteristic features of "Sorath" and "Sindhi Harappans" will be clear after considering these various steps.