Introduction

by F.A. Durrani, I. Ali & G. Erdosy

Six seasons of excavations[1] at the site of Rehman Dheri have laid bare the remains of an important regional centre of the late 4th-early 2nd millennia BC,[2] showing the precocious development of town planning, as well as of craft traditions and trade relations, on the NW Frontier. Clearly, the site played a significant role in the evolution of urbanism in ancient Pakistan (Durrani 1981, 1984; Durrani, Ali and Erdosy 1994). However, apart from the publication of the stratigraphic sequence and of a large corpus of ceramics (Durrani 1988; cf. also Durrani, Ali and Erdosy 1991, summarising operations in 1991), no analysis of the wealth of evidence had been undertaken until now.[3] It is the purpose of the present volume to supply this need, in view of the importance of the material.

[1] *The first two seasons of excavations took place in February-April, 1976 and 1977, respectively, and accounted for the all the major operations: the trench against the inner face of the enclosure wall in B-IV, the trench across the postulated 'main street' in F-0 and Ff-I, and the trenches in the habitation areas of E-II and Ff-IV. In 1979 two further trenches were opened up in the SW sector (B-IV/Square 23 and C-IV/Square 21). In 1980 several problems were tackled through a series of small operations; the area of the 'main street' was again opened in trenches D-0, Dd-I and E-0, while the enclosure wall was sought in Trenches A-IV and Bb-0. Finally, in 1982 Dr A. Rehman opened another small trench in the eastern sector of the mound (H-II), revealing further domestic structures.*

[2] *Or, using Shaffer's standard terminology (Shaffer 1991), the Regionalisation and Integration Eras of the Indus Valley Cultural Tradition. For other recent statements regarding the evolution of the Indus Valley cultural tradition see Mughal (1990a and 1990b), or Meadow (1992).*

[3] *Except for (unpublished) studies of the terracotta human figurines by K. Flavin (incorporated, with revisions, into the present volume) and of the microlithic industry by H. Shudai. See also Durrani and Wright 1992, Khan 1979.*

Following the Introduction, describing the layout as well as the stratigraphic sequence, 5 individual papers will be presented on various artefact categories. The first will treat the corpus of beads. The next three will discuss the wide range of terracotta objects: human figurines, animal figurines and miscellaneous finds (comprised of birds and bird whistles, miniature pots, wheels, bangles, sling-balls and toy-cart frames). The final contribution will deal with potter's marks, frequently found just above the base on potsherds, and with the important corpus of - uninscribed - seals.

Publication of these reports will leave only three important categories of evidence to be dealt with in future papers. The first concerns bone and copper objects; the second, the vast corpus of microliths which, in spite of the introduction of metal tools, remained the backbone of technology; and the third, floral and faunal remains, from which patterns of subsistence will have to be extracted. Analysis of these materials is in progress and they will be published in a future report, along with a broad overview of the significance of Rehman Dheri to the emergence of complex societies in ancient Pakistan. Altogether, there is a rich and varied corpus of well stratified materials which is matched by few other sites in South Asia, and it is hoped that the present report will lay the foundations for in-depth, scientific studies, to be conducted in the context of future excavations which the authors plan to undertake in the coming seasons.

Before turning to the material itself, it is our pleasant duty to thank numerous individuals who assisted in the preparation of the material. Above all, we wish to thank the devotion of students of both M.A. and M.Phil classes of the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar: above all, Shakirullah, but also Messrs Azmat Ali, Sardar Ali, Dost Mohammad, Umar Farooq, Moammad Shafiq, Mohammad Naeemullah Jan, Naseem Maqsood, Adnan Tariq, Mohammad Humayun, S. Ayaz Ali Shah, Inayatullah, Nadeem, and Mujeeb-ur-Rehman. Creation of the computerised data base, as well as formatting of the text for publication, were assisted by the staff of the Department of Computer Science while the Department of Geology (as well as J.M. Kenoyer) kindly identified different raw materials, and their possible sources, utilised by the craftsmen of Rehman Dheri. Photographs were taken by Mr Asad Ali, while line drawings were provided by Messrs Mohammad

Naeem and Mohammad Daud Kamal, both draughtsmen of the Department of Archaeology.

Last, but not least, our thanks go to those who participated in the original excavations at Rehman Dheri, and even took turns directing operations. Many of them - Drs Taj Ali and Abdur Rehman, as well as Messrs Shah Nazar Khan, Farooq Swati and Mohammad Daud Kamal along, of course, with the authors of this volume - remain integral to the Department of Archaeology of the University of Peshawar; we can only hope that future excavations will produce an equally talented corps of scholars to carry the Department forward in the future.

Stratigraphy at Rehman Dheri

The stratigraphy of the site has already been described in the original excavation report (Durrani 1988). However, the latter was mainly concerned with establishing the general importance of the site, and on the ceramic sequence, focussing, thus, on the largest excavated area in the SW sector, at the expense of excavated areas in the central, northern and eastern parts of the site. As a good proportion of the excavated finds comes from these other trenches, they need to be briefly described here, in alphabetical order, and related to the overall stratigraphic sequence (as summarised in Figure 1).[4] The full list of excavated areas at Rehman Dheri thus runs as follows:

Trench A-IV/squares 4 and 5: two squares were opened in 1980 in the SW corner of the site, immediately to the west of the main operations. They were designed to investigate (early) deposits at the base of the mound, associated with the fortifications; however, since neither significant structural remains, nor a wealth of artefacts, were encountered, the operation was abandoned without virgin soil having been reached.

Trench B-IV/squares 4, 5, 9, 10, 14, 15, 19, 20, 24, and 25 and Trench B-V/squares 4 & 5 and Trench CIII/21: This was the principal operation at

[4] *This list does not include trenches excavated in 1991: F-III (area of domestic arhitecture, dug to virgin soil) and H-III (area of large mudbrick platform; only partially excavated).*

Rehman Dheri, executed in 1976 and 1977. Three additional squares (*B-IV/23* and *C-IV/21*) were excavated in 1979. Altogether, the excavations provided a full cross-section of the site's history against the inner face of the enclosure wall. Since the trench has already received extensive treatment in the original excavation report (Durrani 1988), it need not be described here, except to say that it produced an extensive corpus of finds in the context of well preserved domestic architecture.

Trench Bb-0/squares 17 and 18: a very limited operation undertaken in 1979 to see if the enclosure wall existed in the western sector of the mound. The latter duly appeared in section, whose accuracy was subsequently confirmed by surface observations and rescraping in 1991 (Durrani, Ali and Erdosy 1991, 1994). Unfortunately, at this point the wall was eroded down to the last 6 courses; it stood on a layer of compact clay, itself just above the virgin soil, and only one solid clayey surface was preserved against its outer face. The top two layers in the trench above the wall appear to represent eroded materials; overall, very few artefacts came from here.

Trenches D-0/square 5, Dd-I/square 24, E-0/square 6, F-0/squares 3, 4, 8, 9, 13, 18, 23 and Ff-I/squares 18 and 23: These areas were excavated in 1977 and 1980, with the hope of locating a major East-West street bisecting Rehman Dheri at its centre. In spite of a deep depression on the surface, however, no trace of a street was identified.[5] Instead, numerous badly eroded domestic structures were exposed, before repeated flooding of the low-lying trenches forced the abandonment of the operation before virgin soil could be reached. Even though inconclusive, this operation yielded a rich corpus of finds, the most numerous after the main excavation unit in the SW quadrant.

Trench E-II/squares 16, 17, 21 and 22: Residential area in the southern half of the mound, excavated in 1976. As described in the original report, only two squares were dug to virgin soil, due to the preservation of a large mudbrick house in the other two. In contrast to the other areas of habitation, this was

[5] *It may be noted that examination of the surface contours of the site in 1991 suggested the presence of a long street, aligned roughly NNE-SSW (parallel to the enclosure wall), and running from the north end of the site up to the prominent depression where the 1977 trenches were located. It corresponds to a rain-gully visible on the aerial photograph (Durrani 1988: Plate VI), and will be investigated in the future.*

surprisingly poor in finds, although the latter did include some evidence of craft activities, as discussed below.

Trench Ff-IV/squares 16, 17, 21 and 22: Another residential area, in the northern half of the mound. Two of the squares once again provided a complete stratigraphic profile of the site, while the other two were excavated down to the first significant structure encountered.

Trench G-VII/square 12: An abortive operation, undertaken in 1976, just outside the southern section of the city wall. Deposits were dug in 5 layers down to virgin soil, hoping to uncover evidence from the earliest period of occupation. However, since neither any architectural remains nor much artefactual evidence was uncovered, the area was not expanded in subsequent seasons.

Trench H-II/squares 9 and 10: Another residential area, excavated in 1982 under the supervision of Dr A. Rehman; deposits belonging to Periods II and III were excavated in 8 layers, without natural soil having been reached.

Since the aim of the excavations was to sample different areas of the site so as to ascertain stratigraphic history, the focus was on the recording of vertical sequences at the expense of horizontal exposure. As a result, little may be said about the organisation of social and economic activities. While no complete house plans were recovered, several rooms, ranging in size from 1*3 to 4*6 metres were found in Trench *B-IV* (Durrani 1988: Figures E-H), invariably associated with a full compliment of hearths, ovens, grinders and, occasionally, storage jars placed in the ground (e.g. Durrani 1988: Plate XV-B). A similar pattern was found in Trenches *E-II*, *Ff-IV* and *F-0/Ff-I* as well. Further, some areas could be identified with significant craft activities based on their artefactual content, even if no traces of the industrial installations themselves were found. For example, *B-IV/20*-layer 3 and *F-0/3*-layers 1-3, belonging to the Period II/IIIA interface, all yielded extensive corpora of finished as well as unfinished beads, suggesting the presence of a lapidary industry in at least two distinct parts of the site.[6]

[6] *Several unfinished beads were also found in the residential areas of E-II and Ff-IV. Although the sample is insufficient for determining whether a correlation between certain raw materials and certain localities could be established, at least four areas of production may, therefore, be postulated as a hypothesis.*

Likewise, observations regarding the layout of the settlement may be made even without large-scale exposure, thanks to aerial photographs, detailed surface observations (Durrani, Ali and Erdosy 1991 and 1994), and a good scatter of soundings in every area of the site. It is now clear that the settlement was surrounded by an enclosure wall from the beginning, and that the area within the latter was fully occupied: Trenches in *Bb-0, B-IV, C-IV, Ff-IV, E-II* and *G-VII* all yielded remains of Period IA. Since the area enclosed within the wall was determined, in 1991, to extend over nearly 7 hectares, Rehman Dheri must have been one of the largest and most important regional centres of the late 4th millennium BC. Its location along important trade routes connecting Afghanistan and the Northwest with the Panjab and Baluchistan, reflected in the rich variety of raw materials processed by craftsmen, must have been a principal factor in its precocious development.

At the same time, given the cultural sophistication of even the earliest phases of Rehman Dheri, one must look for antecedents elsewhere. In light of the preference of early agriculturalists - in South Asia as in West Asia - for varied environments, their traces are most likely to be located on the alluvial fans issuing out of the foothills of the Sulaiman Range some 60 km to the West. The discovery of an early Neolithic site at Sheri Khan Tarakai (Khan, Knox and Thomas 1991) supports this supposition. One hopes that with the establishment of more settled conditions in the tribal areas, where many potentially early settlements lie, surveys could be conducted to fully test this hypothesis.

As regards town planning the regular contours of the enclosure wall already afford some indication of an equally well controlled layout of structures within. This is supported by the consistent orientation of structures in all areas and periods of occupation, and confirmed by the evidence of aerial photographs (Durrani 1988: Plate 6) and surface observations. One of the goals of future excavations (as well as of detailed surface work) will be to lay bare the organising principles of the site. Already the tentative hypothesis may be offered that large-scale industrial activity was carried out along the western side of the mound, while public structures were located in the eastern half; however, given the limited sample supporting this assertion, it would be well to await further work before pronouncing on the subject in greater detail.

Finally, during the buildup of the site, a succession of hard-packed clay layers were deposited over large areas. In all the excavated trenches the same alternation of hardpacked clay and looser ashy deposits (containing the bulk of the cultural debris) may be observed. Although not comparable to the massive platforms of Mohenjo-daro, Mehrgarh, Lothal or Kalibangan[7], they represent a concerted attempt at periodically reconstructing the site in different areas.

A Note on the Provenance of Finds

As described in the original excavation report (Durrani 1988), the stratigraphy of the site was first established in the SW quadrant, where the most extensive operations took plece. Altogether, 20 stratigraphic units (called *levels* in this report) were isolated, and divided into 5 periods of occupation on the basis of the succession of brick structures and thick deposits of clay. Levels 20-18 belonged to Period IA, 17-13 to Period IB, 12-9 to Period II, 8-7 to Period IIIA and 6-1 to Period IIIB. Each Period was ushered in by the laying down of a thick deposit of compact clay, on which structures were erected and occupation debris accumulated. Although the other excavations were not physically contiguous to the main reference trench, on the basis of the distribution of key ceramic types (such as flanged rim jars, carinated bowls with polychrome decoration and lids) they may be correlated with the sequence in the latter. The results of the correlation are summarised in Table 1, although for ease of reference the finds will also be assigned absolute levels in the course of presentation.

A consistent series of 12 radiocarbon dates (Durrani 1988: Figure D) fixed the absolute dates of Periods I, II and III at 3300-2850, 2850-2500 and 2500-1900 BC, respectively. These dates are quite consistent with the comparative studies of artefact types, which were undertaken, albeit in a preliminary way. Thanks to the work of Casal (1961, 1964), Dales (1979; Dales and

[7] *It should be noted, however, that a mud-brick platform of some 22 by 6 metres was located in 1991 and may have served as the foundation for some public edifice, which has, unfortunately, long vanished. It is significant that both of the seals found in 1991 in stratified contexts came from a trench laid against this feature.*

Kenoyer 1986, 1989 and 1990), Dani (1971), Fairservis (1956 and 1959), Halim (1971, 1972), Jarrige (1989, 1990; Jarrige and Lechevallier 1979), Khan (1965), Mughal (1972a 1972b, 1981) and to the ongoing efforts at Harappa (Meadow 1992), there is now an extensive corpus of properly documented materials to allow the establishment of a comparative stratigraphy all over Pakistan. There is also a lively, on-going debate on the processes accompanying the rise of urbanism in the Greater Indus Valley, and the rich corpus of materials about to be presented will undoubtedly play a role in shaping future opinions on the subject.

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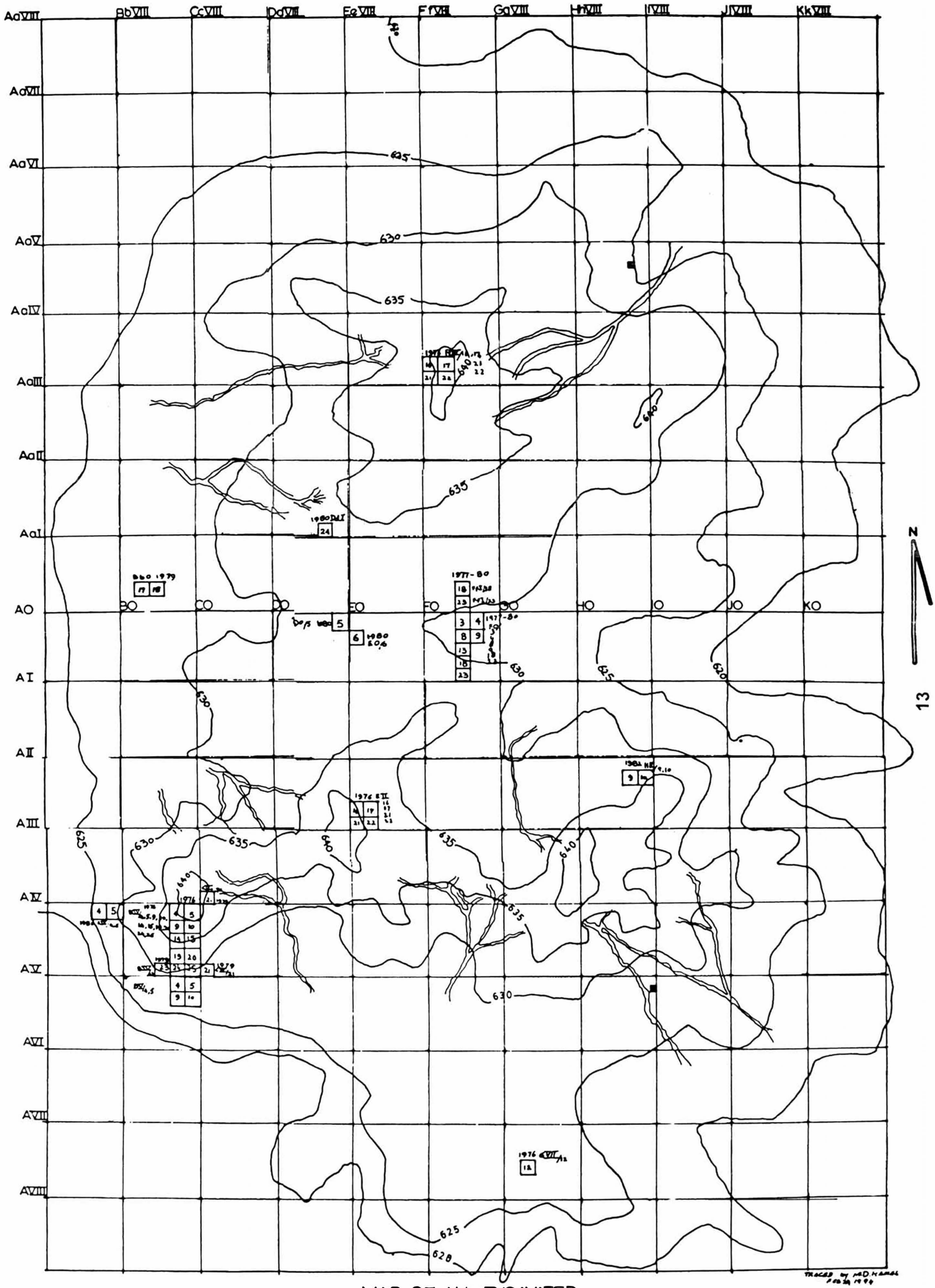
Comparative Stratigraphy of Rehman Dheri Operations

Absolute	Aiv 45	BB0 1718	CIII 21	D05	DDI 24	E06	EIII6 TO22	FO3T O8	FO13 TO18	FO23	FFII8 23	FFIV16T O22	GVII 12	HII910	BIV45	BIV9 10	BIV1 415	BIV19	BIV20	BIV23	BIV24	BIV25	CIV21
1		1					1					1	1		1								
2							2					2			2	1	1						
3							3					3			3	2	2		1				
4			1				4					4		1	4	3							
5			2				5					5		2	5	4	3	1					
6			3				6					6		3	6	5	4	2					
7			4	1	1	1	7				1	7		4	7	6	5	3	2	1			
8	1		5	2	2	2	8	1		1	2	8		5	8	7	6	4	3	2	1	1	1
9			6	3	3		9	2	1	2	3	9		6	9	8	7	5	4	3			
10			7	4	4	3	10	3	2	3	4	10		7	10	9	8	6	5	4	2	2	2
11			8			4	11	4	3	4	5	11		8	11	10	9	7	6	5			3
12	2		9			5	12	5	4	5	6	12			12	11	10	8	7	6	3	3	4
13															13								
14	3		10			6	13	6	5	6		13			14	12	11	9					
15			11				14		6			14			15	13	12						
16			12				15					15			16	14	13	10	8	7	4		5
17	4						16					16	2		17	15	14	11	9	8	5	4	6
18		2					17					17	3		18	16		12	10	9	6	5	7
19		3					18					18	4		19	17	15	13	11	10	7	6	8
20		4					19						5		20	18	16	14	12	11	8	7	9



MAP OF ALL EXCAVATED TRENCHES IN REHMAN DHERI, 1976-82.