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A Note on a Terracotta Ring-shaped Object with Animal Figurines and a Miniature Pot of the Balochistan Tradition in the Okayama Orient Museum

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岡山市立オリエント美術館所蔵の
動物・ミニチュア容器付環状土製品について

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In this paper, a terracotta ring-shaped object with animal figurines and a miniature pot in the collection of the Okayama Orient Museum is reported. Although its provenance is unknown, its uniqueness is important for understanding the nature of the Kulli culture in Balochistan during the late third millennium BCE. Similar objects that are known from the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean region may be related to this rare object of the Kulli culture.

1 INTRODUCTION

In this paper, a terracotta ring-shaped object with animal figurines and a miniature pot in the Okayama Orient Museum is to be reported and its significance is to be discussed.

As discussed below, this specimen, which has unique features, is presumed to have been brought from Balochistan, although its provenance is unknown. Its stylistic features indicate its affiliation to the Kulli culture, but no comparable example has been known so far. The unique features of this specimen help us understand the prehistoric cultures in Balochistan.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE TERRACOTTA OBJECT IN THE OKAYAMA ORIENT MUSEUM

This specimen in the collection of the Okayama Orient Museum is complete except for possible partial repaintings that seem to have been recently made, especially on the stand of the bird. It consists of a ring with three short legs, two humped bulls, one bird and a miniature pot (Figures 1 - 6). A whitish slip (light grey 2.5Y 8/2) is executed over a reddish orange clay (dull orange 7.5YR 7/3) and paintings are made in black (brownish black 10YR 3/1 - yellowish grey 2.5Y 4/1). The measurements are shown in Table 1.

The ring is made hollow. Sets of two or three lateral strokes are drawn on the external side of the ring and the space between them is filled with oblique cross-

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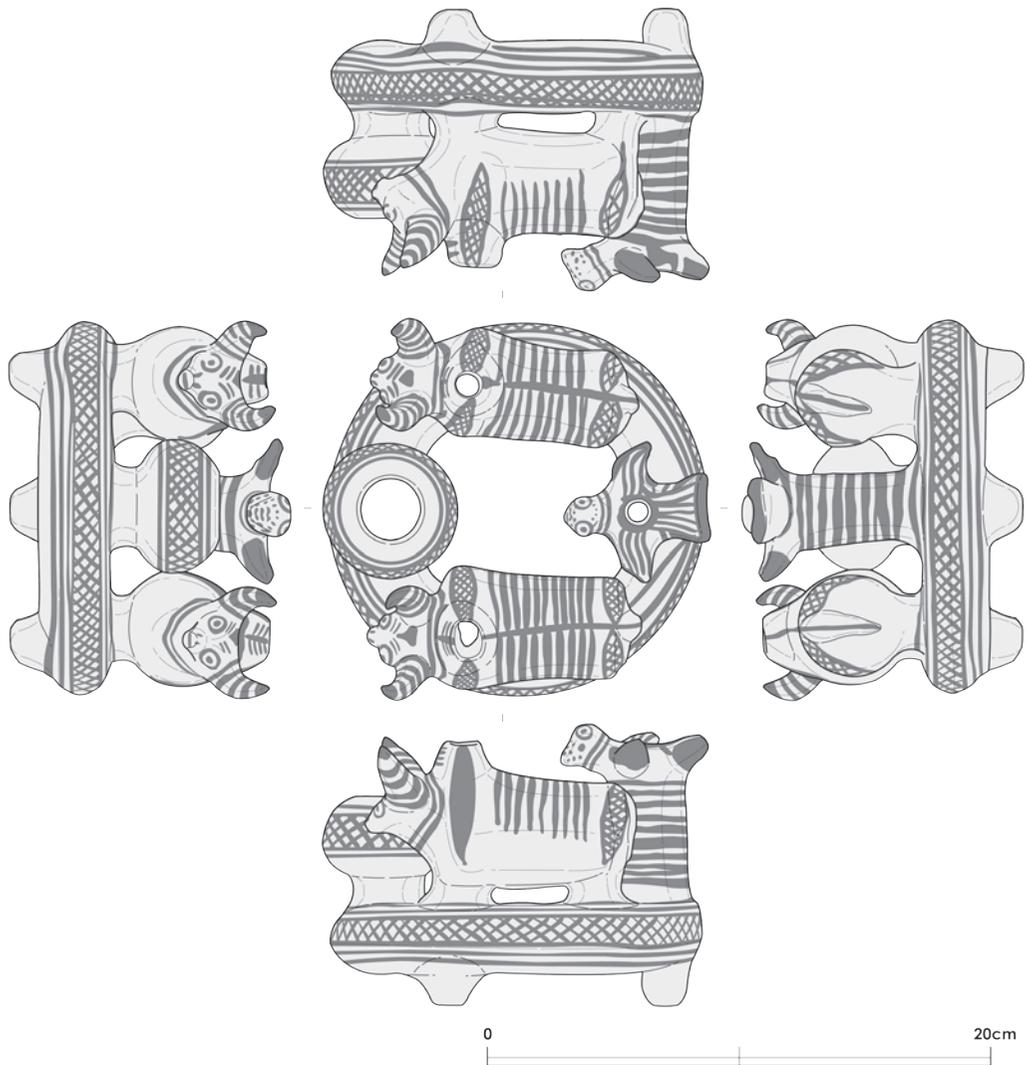


Fig. 1 Scale-drawings of terracotta ring-shaped object in the Okayama Orient Museum (1:3)

Table 1 Measurements of terracotta ring-shaped object in the Okayama Orient Museum

<i>Portion</i>	<i>External length/width</i>	<i>Internal length/width</i>	<i>Height</i>
Ring	15 cm / 14.7 cm	9.0 cm / 8.4 cm	4.0 cm
<i>Portion</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Height</i>
Miniature pot	5.4 cm	5.4 cm	4.1 cm
Right humped bull	10.8 cm	4.5 cm	6.5 cm
Left humped bull	10.75 cm	4.6 cm	6.5 cm
Bird	5.8 cm	5.8 cm	6.9 cm



Fig. 2 Photos of terracotta ring-shaped object in the Okayama Orient Museum



Fig. 3 Photos of terracotta ring-shaped object in the Okayama Orient Museum



Fig. 4 Photos of terracotta ring-shaped object in the Okayama Orient Museum



Fig. 5 Photos of terracotta ring-shaped object in the Okayama Orient Museum

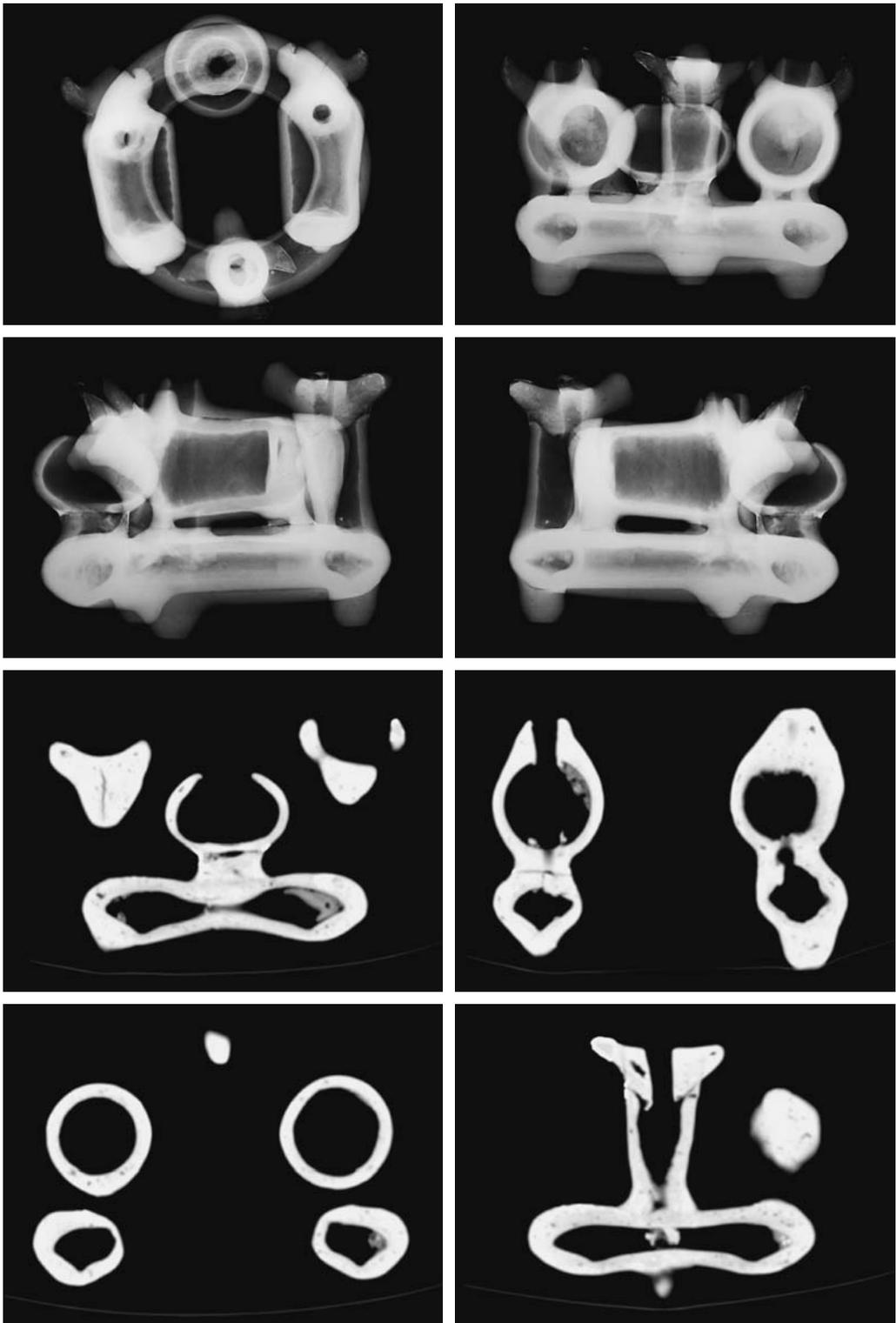


Fig. 6 X-ray images and CT scan images of terracotta ring-shaped object in the Okayama Orient Museum

hatches. Three short legs are attached to the lower side of the ring. The upper part of the ring is finished by a smoothing technique and the lower part is by shallow scraping.

The miniature pot with a short stand is placed on the front part of the ring. It has a globular body with no neck. On its external side, a horizontal register with oblique cross-hatches is delineated by two sets of two lateral strokes. The inner space of the pot is connected with the ring by a hole through the stand.

Two humped bulls, which are placed on both sides of the ring, have identical features. Both face the same direction and are made hollow. The bulls are comprised by a head with prominent horns, a body with a hump, a tail and two joint legs. The surfaces are finished by a smoothing technique. Eyes are represented by two dot-in-circles. The nostrils are indicated by a pair of short strokes and the mouth is by a short lateral stroke. On the forehead is painted a triangular shape and a pair of oblique strokes. The horn is painted with parallel bands. The body is decorated with a straight stroke running from the hump towards the tail and parallel strokes on its sides. On both sides of the hump, a long leaf shape with cross-hatches is drawn. The hump is hollow connecting to the hollow body and the ring.

The bird is placed on the rear side of the ring with a tall cylindrical stand. It faces the same direction as humped bulls showing a posture of flying with its wings spread. The eyes are indicated by a pair of dot-in-circles as in the case of humped bulls. The front side of the beak is painted with short wavy strokes, around which small dots are irregularly drawn. The wings and the tail are

painted with parallel strokes. A hole is made on the centre of its body connecting to the ring through the stand.

3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TERRACOTTA OBJECT IN THE OKAYAMA ORIENT MUSEUM

Since this specimen in the collection of the Okayama Orient Museum was not obtained from excavations, its provenance including its authenticity is unknown. Recently in Pakistan, illegal outflows of archaeological artefacts have become prominent and production of fakes are also known. Therefore, the authenticity of this specimen is the first issue to be argued.

This specimen is distinguished by its form consisting of a ring, a miniature pot, humped bulls and a bird. Humped bulls and birds are known as independent figurines in Balochistan (Figure 7) and the stylistic similarity between those on this specimen and independent figurines strongly suggest that this specimen was produced based on a style of the Kulli culture during the late third millennium BCE. Terracotta animal figurines of the Kulli style, which show identical features with the animals on this specimen, have been known from several sites like Nindowari (Jarrige et al. no date), Kulli (Stein 1931), Sohr Damb (Franke-Vogt and Ibrahim 2005; Franke-Vogt 2005a, 2005b) and Mehi (Stein 1931), but no example with several figurines combined has been known. Thus this specimen in the Okayama Orient Museum is very unique and its authenticity cannot be confirmed by any evidence from excavated sites.

However, the features of animal

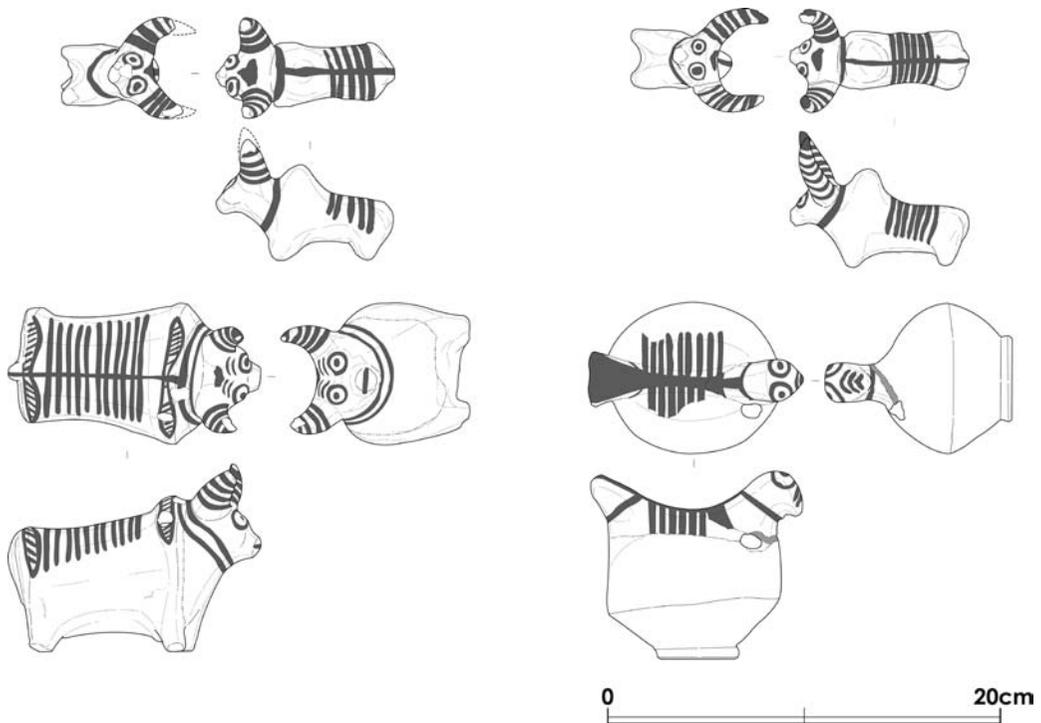


Fig. 7 Kulli-style terracotta animal figurines in the Okayama Orient Museum (after Uesugi 2010)

representation on this specimen are identical with the terracotta animal figurines from excavated sites, and no clear deviation from the typical Kulli style figurines can be observed in this specimen. Although there are some traces of repainting on this specimen, no clear evidence of recent works can be found. It is also clear that the elements of this specimen were modelled and jointed at the same time of production. Based on this circumstantial evidence, it is not unlikely that this specimen is authentic belonging to the Kulli culture during the late third millennium BCE.

Apart from its authenticity, the uniqueness of this specimen is undoubted. Its three-dimensional iconographic composition and hollow structure that interconnects every element are the most outstanding features of this specimen. The hollow

structure may indicate a use of this specimen as some vessel, but its exact function cannot be determined.

This kind of terracotta artefact is widely known in the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean (Bignasca 2000; Shikaku 2003). They are called 'Kernos Ring' in the context of these regions, derived from a name of Greek pottery. This artefact is widely known from the Late Bronze Age or the Early Iron Age sites in Cyprus and Palestine and recent studies suggest that the origin of this artefact may go back to the Uruk period or even earlier periods in the Middle East.

In these regions, several types have been known. According to R. Shikaku's classification (Shikaku 2003), two broad categories can be classified; Type 1 has miniature vessels on a ring and Type 2 has an animal-head spout. The latter type can



Fig. 8 Distribution of terracotta ring-shaped object ('Kernos Ring') in Southwestern Asia (no scale)

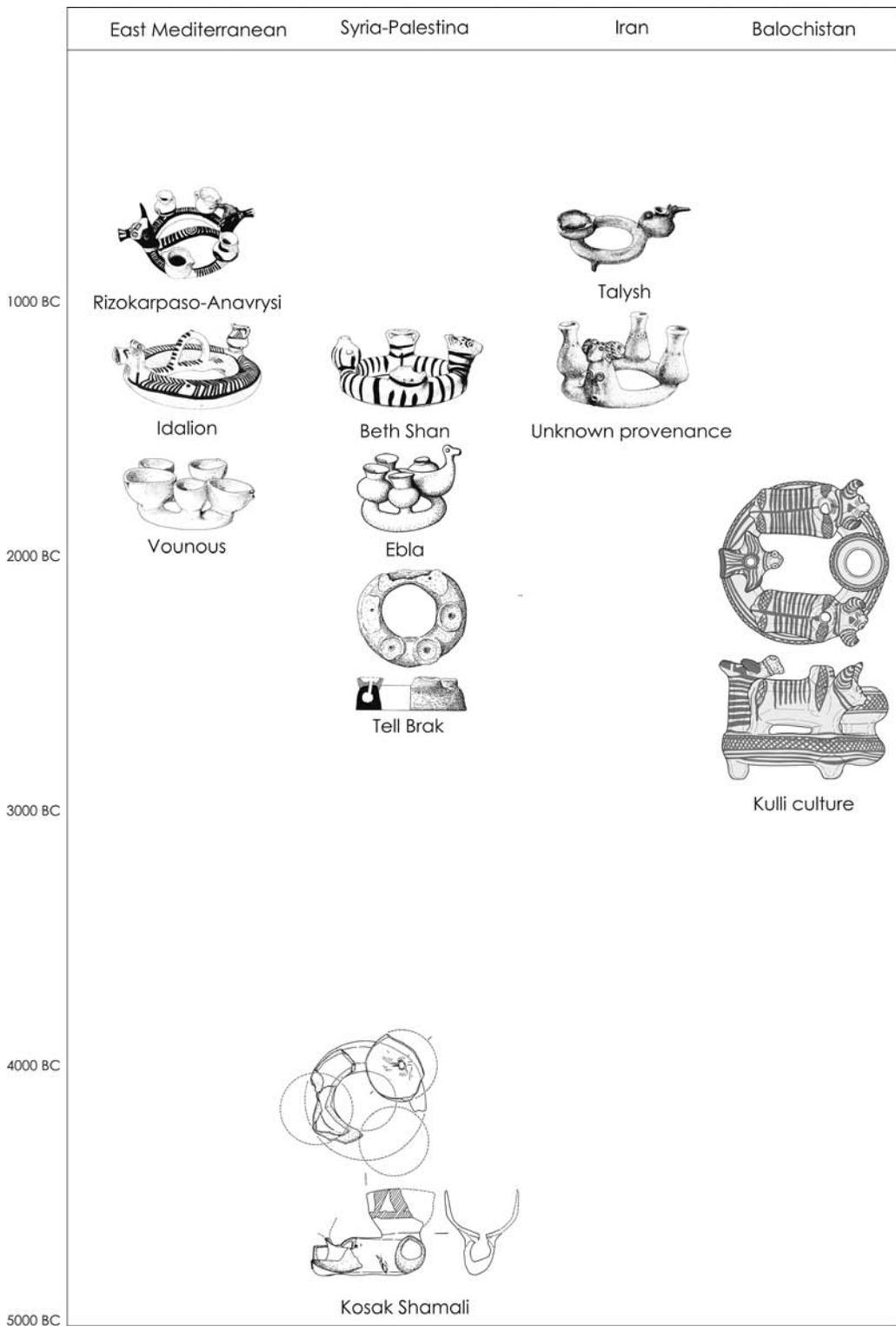


Fig. 9 Chronological distribution of terracotta ring-shaped object in Southwestern Asia (no scale)

be further divided; Type 2a has a handle and Type 2b has no handle. The earliest example of Type 1 is from the post-Ubaid period (the late fifth millennium BCE) at Tell Kosak Shamali in northern Syria (Nishiaki and Matsutani 2001) and this type continues to the first millennium BC in the Middle East. In the developments of Type 2 which occurs mainly from the 14th century BCE to the first millennium BCE, the Cyprus Island played an important role through maritime trading networks that covered the eastern Mediterranean and Palestine region.

Although the author is not going to argue the relations between these Middle Eastern examples of 'Kernos Ring' and the specimen of the Kulli style, the existence of similar formal features cannot be ignored in assessing the significance of the specimen in the Kulli culture. Chronologically, this kind of artefacts has a tradition in the Middle East for a long period since the fifth millennium BCE and the specimen from the Kulli culture is not an isolated example. Although it should be admitted that more specimens must be obtained by excavations from archaeological contexts for discussing this unique object in the Kulli culture, the widespread relations of the Kulli culture with the Middle East (Kondo *et al.* 2007) should be taken into consideration in arguing the historical importance of this specimen in the Okayama Orient Museum.

4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this short paper, a unique terracotta object in the collection of the Okayama Orient Museum was reported. The author realizes that this specimen should be widely known among archaeologists, although much more comparable specimens and much more information must be awaited.

Balochistan is an important region connecting the Indus valley with the Iranian plateau and the Arabian peninsula. However, the state of our knowledge on this region is still limited for understanding its significance in the history in spite of important excavations at several sites. The author expects that the specimen discussed in this paper may contribute to better understanding the historical importance of Balochistan.

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Fig. 6: provided from Okayama Orient Museum.

Fig. 7: produced by the author based on Biagnasca 2000.

Figs. 8-9: produced by the author using illustrations in Biagnasca 2000, Nishiaki and Matsutani eds. 2001, Pieridou 1971, Matthiae *et al.* 1995, Rast and Schaub 1980, James 1966.

