In traditional archaeology, traces of play and gaming have commonly been dismissed as less significant. Such remains are recurrently seen as traces of idle pastime, which is to say, they are viewed upon as something 'non-serious'. Traces of play can sometimes also be explained in terms of social rituals, such as associated with social status. The remains can in this way be said to be made serious; be provided a role within that ancient societal structure that is in focus. What happens in this case, however, is that the 'fun' dimension is lost.

This study examines game-related finds with the aim of reaching and discussing the social influence of the dimension of play in an ancient settlement. The finds originate from the Bronze Age Indus Valley settlement of Mohenjo-daro in Sindh, southern Pakistan. They are studied through a critical reading of older, published and unpublished, excavational documents. Based on selected results of this analysis, the study makes use of both established and new terminology in order to illuminate different aspects or spectra of play. In this reasoning, the division between form and content maintained by Simmel, as well as the emphasis by Bateson on autonomously working systems, emerge as central concepts.

The study takes on a twofold structure in that the aim of reaching play at the same time offers a test of the scientific linguistic usage. The character of testing builds on a modified form of grounded theory, in which a model of work is created in the shape of a grid. It is argued that this way of work has the potential to yield alternative, more socially embedded insights into the settlement.

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Elke Rogersdotter

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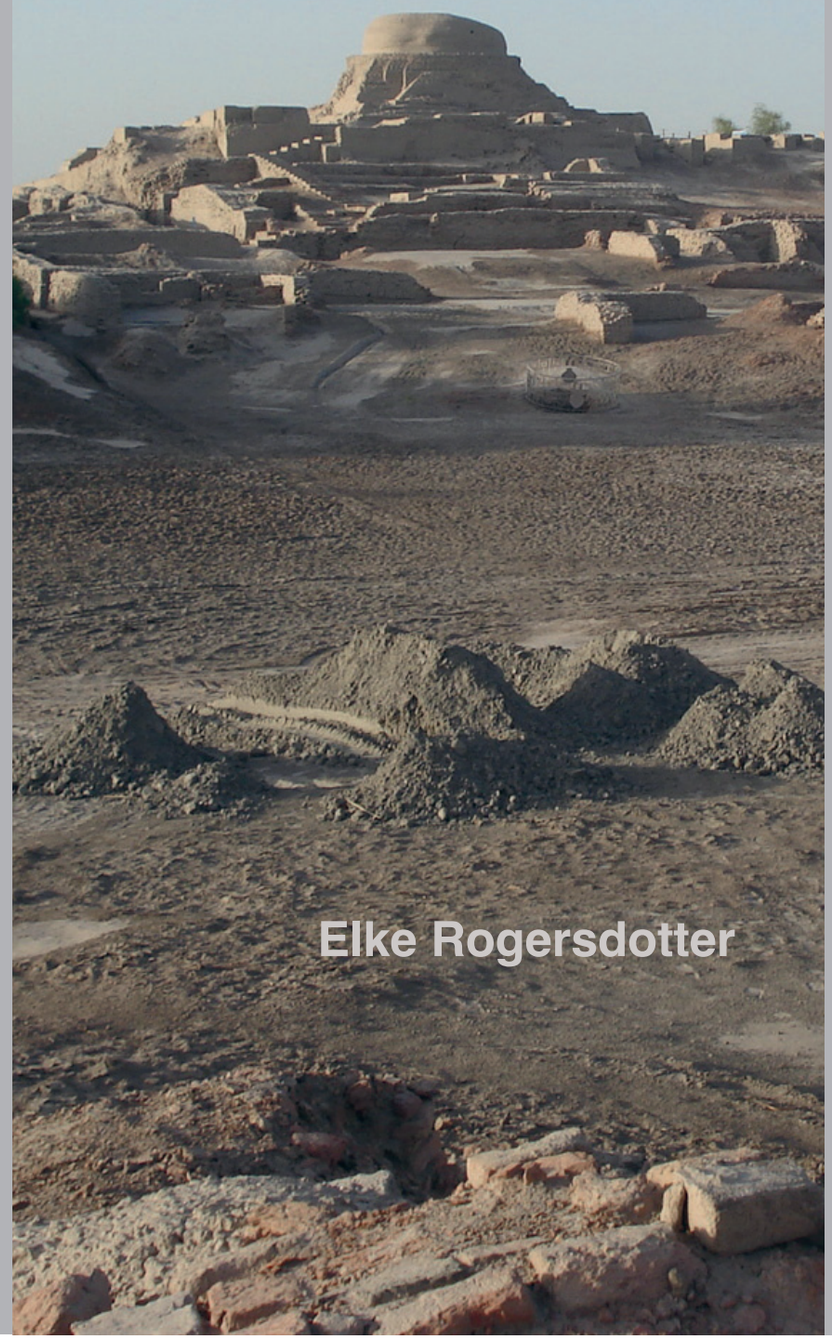
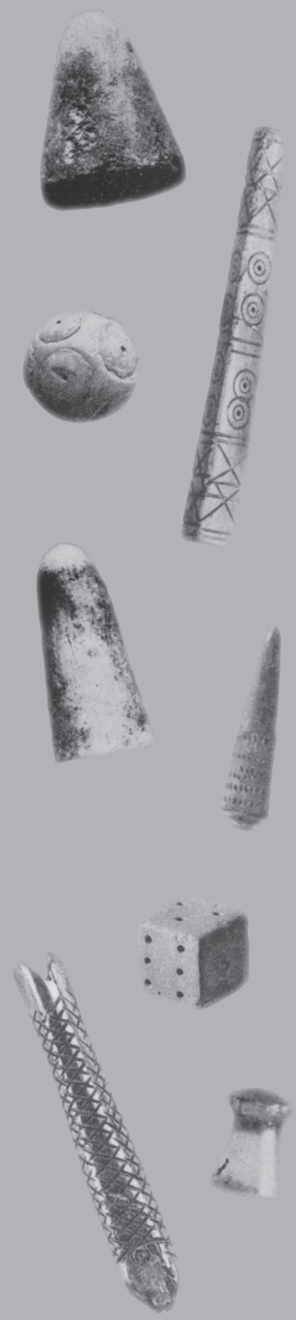
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