

Indus-Saraswati Valley Civilization

Arts and Culture

Srabonti Bandyopadhyay

Discoveries

- Creativity and the arts subsumed everyday life
- Technologically advanced techniques used
- No direct evidence but a thriving music and dance culture can be inferred
- Patterned clothing were in use, evidence of cotton, wool and silk have been found.
- Jewelry, ornaments used to distinguish social classes, identity
- Hair styles distinguished gender, divinity and status.
- Marriage helped trade and peace.
- Women, Children and Nature were major artistic themes.

Methodology

Determined by study of diverse artifacts

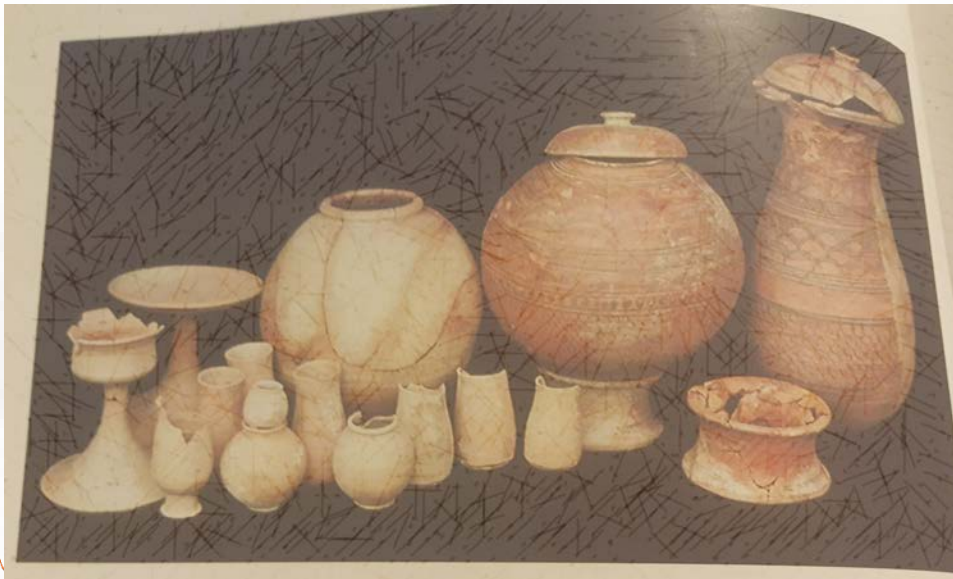
- Sculpture
- Pottery
- Figurines



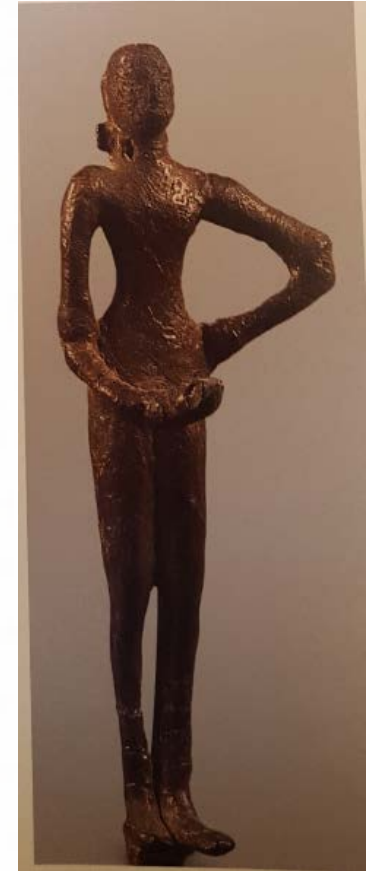
- Toys
- Jewelry
- Seals



- Burial Artifacts

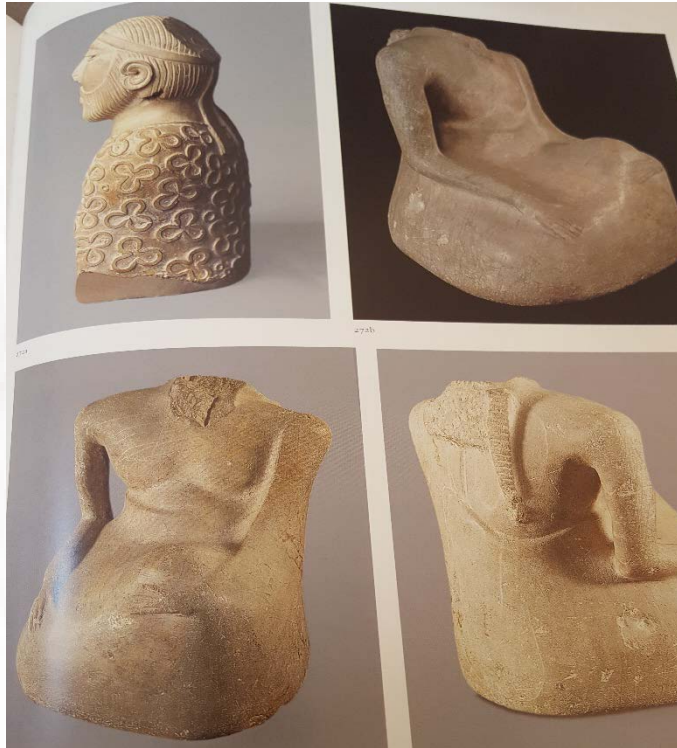


Sculpture – the famous “Dancing Girl”



Bronze Sculptures, Harappa
2600-1900 BC
Showcased knowledge of
metal blending, casting and
knowledge of proportion

Sculpture – The “Priest King”

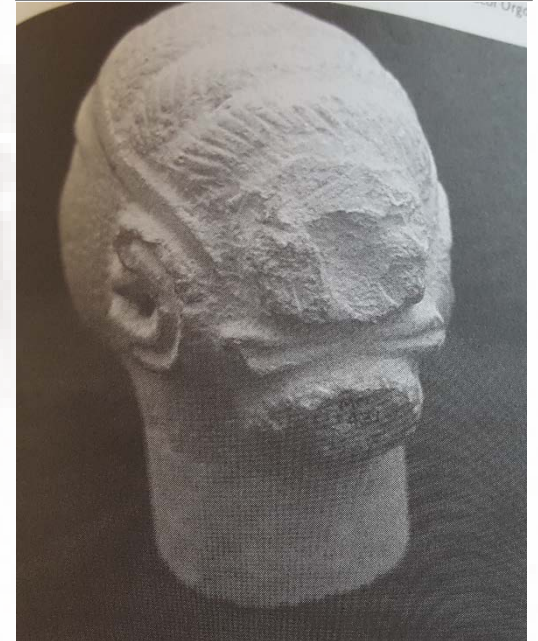
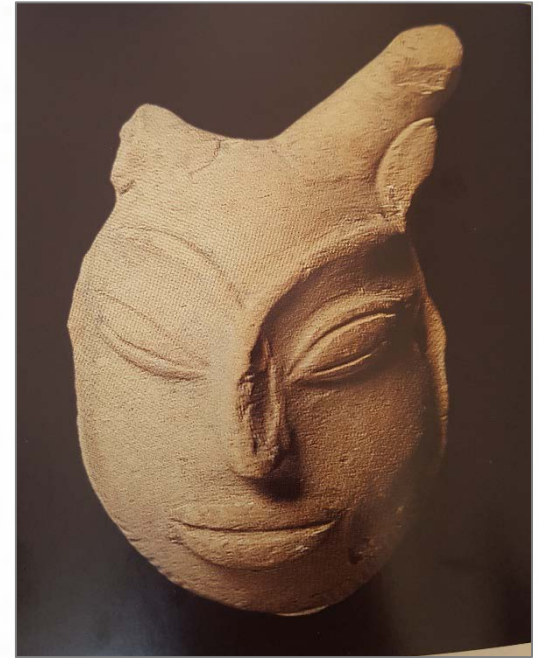


The Priest King, Mohenjo Daro 2200-1900 BC, Note amulet bands around arm and head. The incised eyes and amulet places may indicate inlaid jewel.

The other sculptures found may give an indication of how the arms and the rest of the sculpture had been

Sculpture - Findings

- The bronze “dancing girl” artistic at the same time technologically very advanced, by almost 2000 years.
- Patterned cloth appeared to have been used.
- Elaborate hairstyles
- Almond shaped eyes appear to be dominant in the sculptures



Pottery



Fig. 8.18. Perforated jar, Harappa, cat. no. 192.

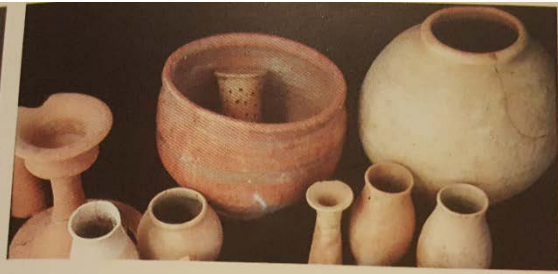
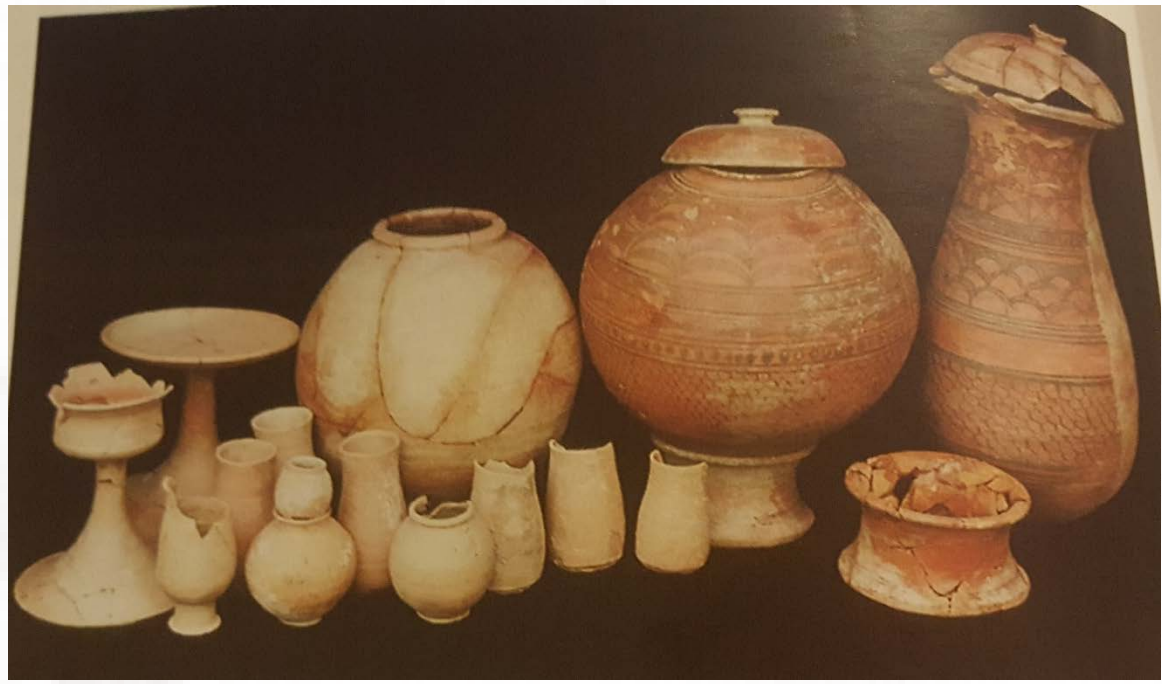


Fig. 8.17. Deep bowl with wide mouth and flaring rim, cat. no. 191 and perforated jar found inside, Harappa, cat. no. 192.



Fig. 8.18. Earlier (left) and later forms of scored goblets from Harappa. The pointed-base goblet on the left must be supported to stand upright.



Pottery Designs



- Polychrome Mehrgarh pottery, 3300 – 1700 BC



Pipal Leaf Motif,
Nausharo, 2600 -
2550 BC

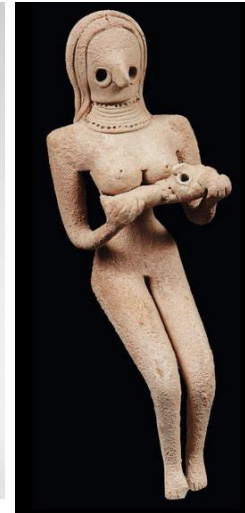


POTTERY DESIGNS (TOP); TERRACOTTAS:
HUMAN AND ANIMAL FIGURINES; MASK;
CIRCULAR AND TRIANGULAR CAKES (BOTTOM)

Pottery - Findings

- Used for Utilitarian purposes like cooking, storing grains
- Smooth and of superior technical quality, the utilitarian pottery were usually not very design intensive
- Other potteries like the perforated jars may have had ritualistic purposes
- Potteries with animal motifs like Fish, Eagles, Bull in polychrome would have been for festive and aesthetic purposes

Pottery - Figurines



- Female figurines with maternal theme
- Earlier Indus Period, predominantly female in Harappa, Mohenjo Daro, Banawali, Mehrgarh
- Many found in broken, discarded conditions in secondary sites outside of the main sites
- Varied head dresses, jewelry, scant clothing



Figurines -male

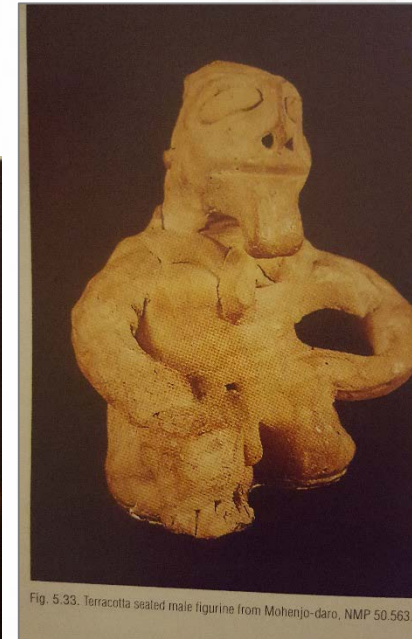
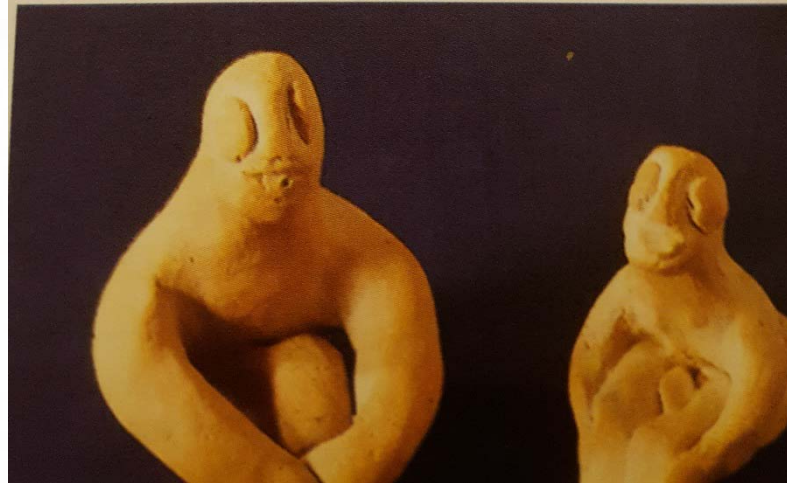


Fig. 5.33. Terracotta seated male figurine from Mohenjo-daro, NMP 50.563.

- Male figurines were not as common nor varied
- Common hair style was a double bun, these figurines were not as intricate as the men depicted in the stone sculptures
- Jewelry was not very elaborate either, but some were shown with hair ornaments

Figurines -findings

- The female figurines may have been used for ritualistic purposes
- Could have been used as toys or playthings
- Provides an insight into everyday attire like jewelry, hairstyles, dress. Attire may have been used as a way of distinguishing social strata.
- May have had a mother goddess centric religion
- The concentration of female figurines in only certain sites is interesting and may indicate that religion/ values may not have been uniform

Potteries – Toys and Games

Figurines and Masks

Board Games

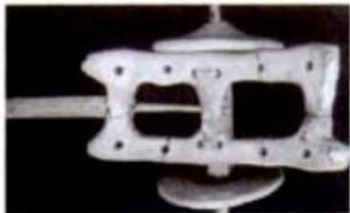
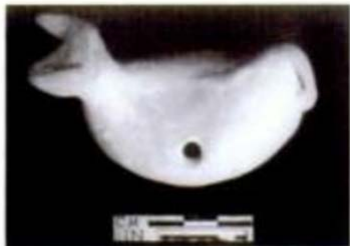


TERRACOTTA CART, HARAPPA



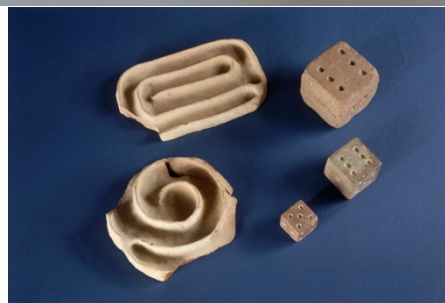
POTTERY BESSING (196); TERRACOTTAS:
HUMAN AND ANIMAL FIGURINES; MASKS;
CIRCULAR AND TRIANGULAR CAKES (BOTTOM)

0 2 cm



TERRACOTTAS: FIGURINE; GAMES AND DICE;
PERFORATED BIRD-SHAPED RATTLE; BULL WITH
MOVEABLE HEAD; CART

Maze Games and Dice



Arts and Culture

Toys and Games - Inferences

- Toys were made of terracotta, clay
- Board games could be made from cloth, stone
- Dice and maze games were made from ivory
- Civilization was not merely about survival, both adults and children found time for recreation

Jewelry

Gold and dark glazed steatite brooch with inlay, Harappa



Gold, Vesuvianite, garnet, agate, jasper and steatite, Mohenjo Daro



Bangles etc.

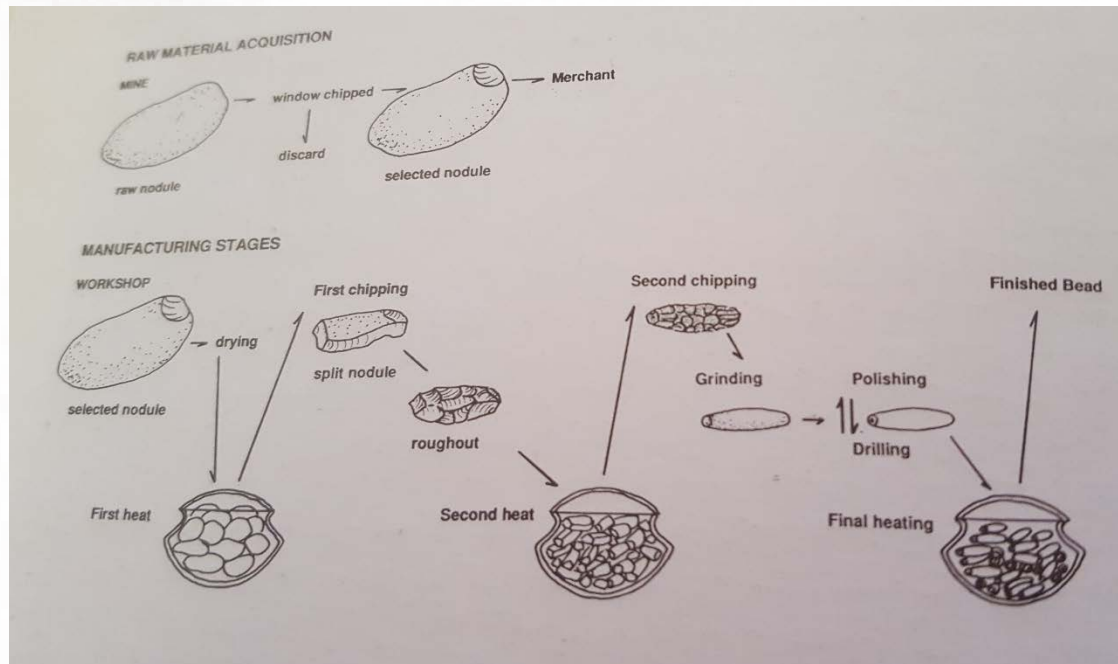
Shell Bangles, Ladles Harappa- 2600 – 1900 BC



Gold bangles, Harappa, 2600- 1900 BC

- Shell Bangles found throughout the civilization
- Ladles may have had ritualistic purpose

Beads and Bead Making Process



- Terracotta , Faience, Gold, Agate, Lapis Lazuli, Jasper beads have been found
- Intricate beads requiring great level of skill and technical prowess existed from the early Harappan / Ravi phase
- Used to adorn or embellish jewelry and figurines

Jewelry- Inferences

- Jewelry played an important role for both men and women in their day to day lives
- Varied variety of materials like agate, jasper, gold, copper alloys, lapis lazuli were used to make the jewelry
- Women especially used necklaces and bangles extensively
- Tiered necklaces may have been worn by the elite
- Bead making process was quite intricate and advanced compared to sister civilizations

Seals – Gateway to stories and myths



Seals – continued



Mohenjo Daro 2500 BC to 2400 BC



Denmark 200 BC to 300 AD

Animal Motifs in seals



Seals- Inferences

- Symbolic aspect of society, scenes from stories appear to be inscribed in the seals
- Terracotta, steatite or metal seals are found
- Used as identification or for trading purposes
- Relationship between nature and humans explored
- Many Yogic centric themes also appear to be prevalent.

Burial Practices

- Pottery and jewelry buried alongside people, may be used to determine status of the individual
- Women were buried more carefully in the inner sanctum of the city
- Matri-local burial
- Marriage may have been used for trading and fostering good relations
- Appears to be primary, secondary and tertiary sites for burial



Mother and Baby at Harappa, grave appears to be disturbed



A female burial at Harappa

Cultural continuity into present day

- Shell Bangles - still used in Kalbelia tribes of Rajasthan, married Bengali women wear Pola, a shell bangle on each hand.
- Use of symbols like the Swastika
- Peepal tree was culturally very symbolic in the Indus Valley Civilization, which holds true for modern Hindus as well.



Unknown

- Script is a huge hindrance in determining culture.
- No concrete evidence on dance and music.
- Little evidence on the kind of clothes worn and materials used for textiles, especially in the case of women.
- Seals hold a lot of information with respect Culture, Religion and Mythology