



INDUS (Sindhu – Saraswati) Civilization

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

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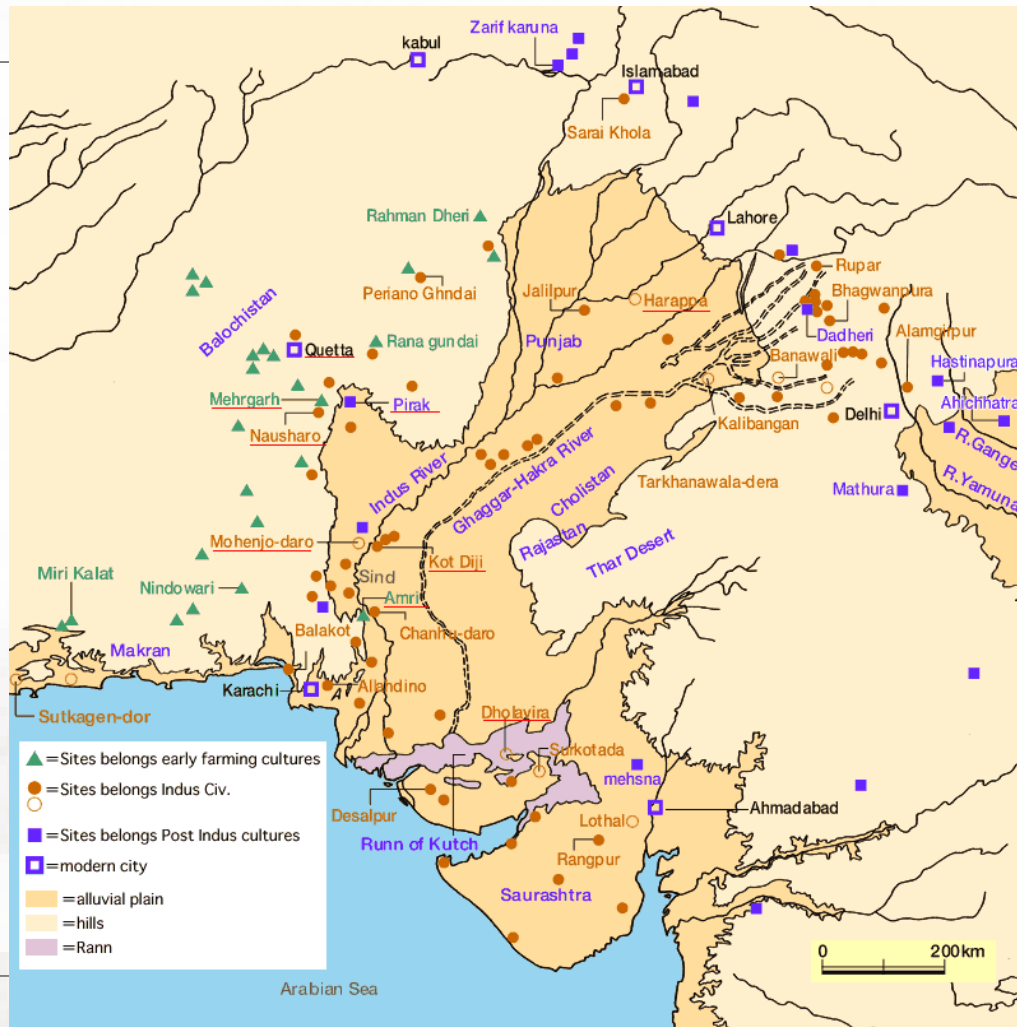
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In the eyes of the FDA....

- IF it is not written, it does not exist
 - IF it is not decipherable, it does not exist
- FDA wants to take the guesswork out

BUT with INDUS Artifacts, **It is all GUESSWORK.**

INDUS VALLEY EXPANSE



Religion & Philosophy

Religion & Philosophy are DISTINCT

- **Religion**

Set of beliefs, feelings, dogmas and practices that define the relation between human being and divinity. Based on Faith

- **Philosophy**

Rational investigation of truth. Philosophy pushes us to question our assumptions of common sense and what appears logical.

Philo” for love; “Sophia” – wisdom”. Philosophers are devoted to wisdom. They are unafraid to ask and think about big questions.

Religion & Philosophy are DISTINCT (2)

- **Philosophy**

Rational investigation of truth.

As I absorbed this definition, it dawned on me
Isn't this what Indian tradition is about? It
asks us not to accept anything but to test
everything by experience i.e. "ANUBHAVA".

INDUS SCRIPT NOT DECIPHERED

- Challenge – Move from the Material World to the Religious Ideological System in the absence of Written Texts.
- What can be learned from-----
 - Religious Structures
 - Iconography
 - Ritual Practices
 - Treatment of the Dead / Burials

Basis for the interpretation and Deductions from the Artifacts

- Direct historical approach
- From better known historical imagery & texts from present day South Asian religions
- Comparative analyses with Mesopotamia and Sumerian civilization

Indus people were into ritualistic practices

Trees and animals were venerated

No evidence of religious structures

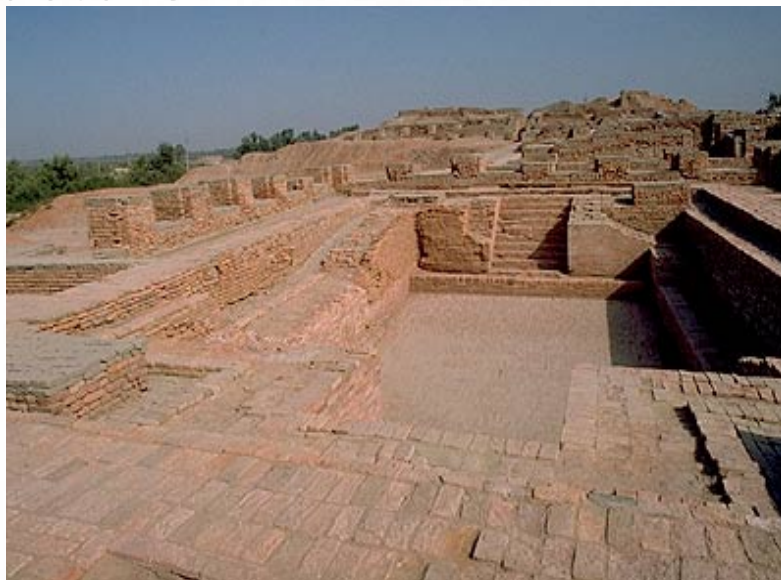
Worship of deity, Mother Fertility Goddess

Belief in life after death

Religious practices - Purification

- Purification of body with a bath
 - Presence of a large rectangular water tight basin despite bathing platforms in every house block
- Is it a religious structure?

THE GREAT BATH



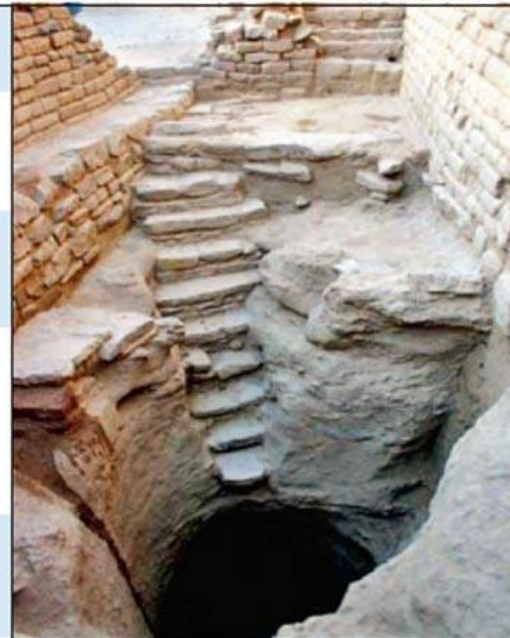
Wells in DHOLAVIRA & KUTCH (Oct 2014)

- Kutch – 3X bigger than the Great Bath
- Bathing platforms at Lothal & Kalibangan

TREASURE OF CIVILIZATION

Pic source: ASI

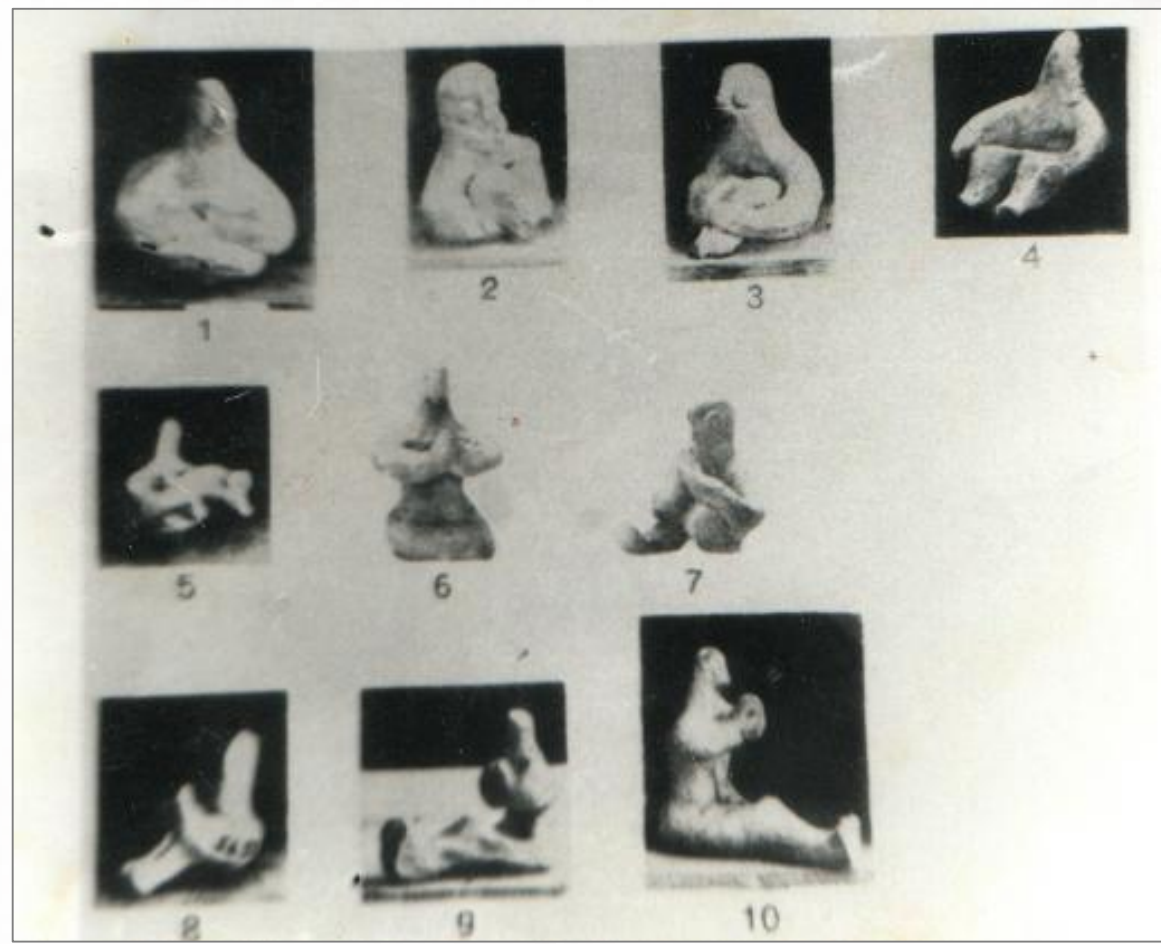
- The Dholavira stepwell dates back to bronze age
- It's located beneath the eastern reservoir of Dholavira
- ASI says a huge lake and an ancient shoreline are buried in the site
- Surveys indicate the presence of more Harappan-age reservoirs and stepwells in the vicinity
- Archaeologists to excavate tanks, stoneware, and sanitation chambers



Religious practices – Purification (2)

- Why need the GREAT BATH structure when bathing platforms are found in every house block?
 - Possibly for purposes of purification prior to a ritual which is a practice still observed
 - Rituals coinciding with season changes & astronomical events such as eclipses?? ; goddess propitiation???
 - Body of water is normally found within or outside temples certainly in South India that is used for rituals (FLOATS) and for purification purposes before certain rituals

Preparation of mind & body



Ritual practices – Female figurines with red pigment



Elephant Head figurine with traces of red and white pigment

4,500 year old Elephant head figurine with stylized widespread ears

Traces of white and red paint bands visible on the face suggest that some wild elephants may have been tamed and ritually decorated, a practice done even now in India



Fire pits in Kalibangan



Did rituals involve FIRE?

- Fire Equally important in Indian religion
 - Fire altars uncovered in Kalibangan
 - 7 oblong clay-lined pits containing charcoal, ash & terracotta cakes, the latter used in kilns to retain heat
 - Each pit had a cylindrical clay stele (an upright stone or slab with an inscription) probably representing the lingam
 - Paved bathing platform associated with these pits
 - Houses in Kalibangan have a room with a fire altar
 - Cattle bones in some pits – animal sacrifice?

Could these have been cooking hearths or kilns for pottery ?

Religious Practices (Fire)

- Terracotta figurines had headgear with side extensions believed to hold oil lamps
- Traces of oil and black residue found in these



Where did they conduct their religious practices?

- NO Shrines
- Citadel mound in Mohenjo-Daro
 - Complex pillared hall for public assembly
- Other unusual buildings
 - Can't confirm their use for religious purpose
 - No evidence of ritual practices or objects



Religious Practice under trees.....

- Possibly and likely
- Seal Features
 - Deity like figure in Pipal tree
 - Individual adorned with horns and head-dress bowed before figure
 - Ritual or rite of passage



TREE MOTIFS (2)

- Heart shaped pipal tree leaves often arranged in groups of 3 were commonly painted on small and large jars, domestic vessels, seals and as part of narrative scenes on terra cotta tablets



Indus Valley



TREE MOTIFS (3)

- Human figures with water jars bow before tree under an arch of pipal leaves
- Trees:
 - Are being worshipped as sacred spaces and symbols
 - Are a place of refuge and sustenance
 - Are symbols of fertility and protection
 - Pipal tree was considered the abode of a horned deity
 - Religious activities involving numerous worshippers take place at the foot of the tree even now

Animals, chimeric - animals & human combined, multiple heads

- Tiger – common motif
- Struggle between animals and humans probably used to tell stories to children and impart morals
- Were the terracotta animals used as Votive offerings in place of actual sacrifice
- Miniature ones as amulets



Animals Motifs (2)



Animal Motifs (3)



Ritual Utensils & Paraphrenalia



Goddess Figurines?

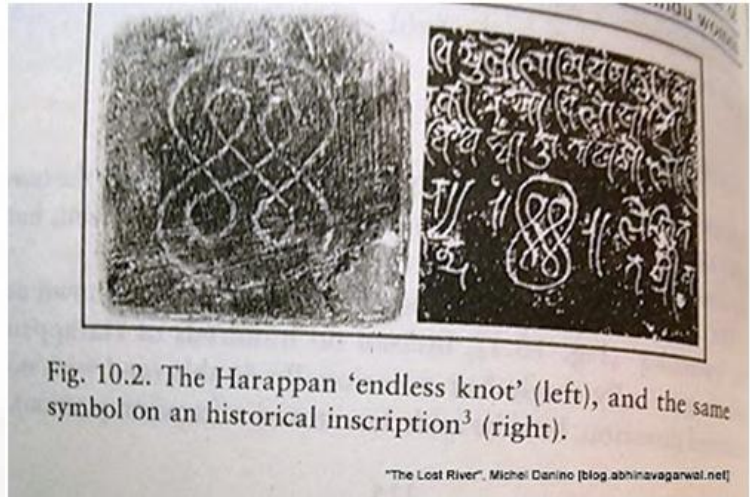


Who conducts the ritual practices PRIEST-KING?



Other icons and symbols

- Endless Knot & Swastikas



Other Motifs (2)

- Endless knot – copper tablets in Mohenjodaro. Does not appear on other objects. May be specific to a cult or community
- Swastika – Could represent the Purushartha (Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha) Left or right turning may represent different philosophy schools
- Fish seal – fertility or protection
- Checker-board design
- Circle & dot
 - Circle – a protective symbol
 - Sun, moon, eye or navel
 - Defense against evil powers
- Conical stone objects
 - Phallic symbols or
 - Pestles
 - Amulets or gaming pieces

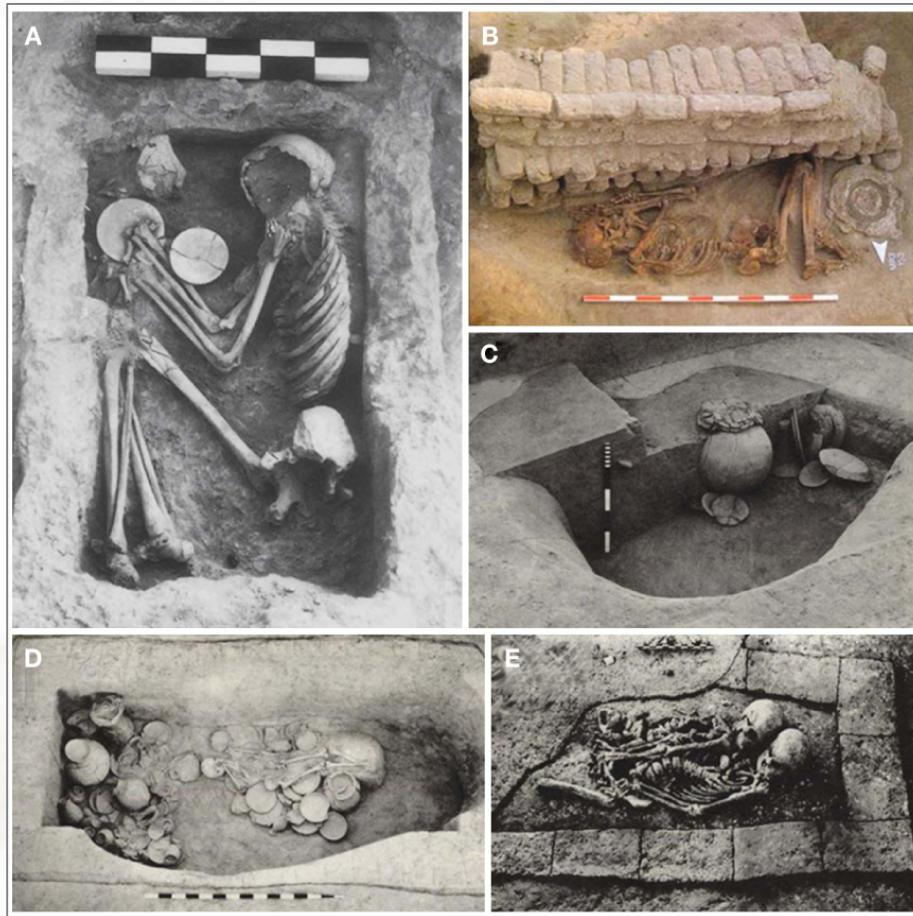
Burials with pottery



Excavated grave in Rakhigari (India) had terracotta pots as funerary objects arranged around the head of the deceased suggesting **a belief in life after death**

No signs of trauma

Burial (2)



A - Burial in Clay box
(Harappa)

B - Pit with side chamber
closed by mud bricks
(Mehrgarh)

C - Pot Burial with
skeleton (Kalibangan)

D - Brick-lined burial
(Kalibangan)

E - Lothal Brick line
double burial

Burial according to socio-religious status (3)

- Sometimes with expensive jewelry
- Group Burial of the same community
- Shell bangles vs. Terracotta
- Jewelry associated with initiation or protection not passed on
- Female burials with jewelry but male burials barely had any

In Conclusion

- Indus society was a ritualistic society
 - Purification of body through bath and yoga
 - Rituals included Fire
 - Trees were used as sacred space and symbols
 - Animals and trees were venerated
 - Used Utensils, Conch and Ladles
 - Worship of Fertility Goddess
- Burial finds leads one to conclude that they believed in life after death
- A number of these religious beliefs continue to this day

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