

Spring 2022 Arts of Asia Lecture Series
Gifts of Rivers and Resources: Art and Power in Ancient Asia
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**The Indus Tradition of Ancient South Asia:
New Perspectives on Crafts, Trade, Ideology and Power**

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Abstract

This presentation will provide an overview of the major crafts and trade networks that developed in the cities and rural settlements of the Indus Tradition of Pakistan and western India. These settlements emerged in diverse environments and at key points along major rivers and coastal regions. Some settlements were located in distant resource areas that were exploited to provide valuable raw materials used in the creation of ornaments, textiles, and symbolic objects. Specialized technologies were developed to create symbols of ideology and power that were used to both integrate and to differentiate people living in the cities and villages. The trade of raw materials to the major production centers, the trade of specific objects between Indus cities and trade with surrounding regions provides evidence for multiple levels of social and economic interaction. Special emphasis will be given to the evidence for diverse communities within the Indus cities as well as the roles of men, women and children in crafts and trade.

General Chronology

Foraging Era (Hunting-Gathering-Foraging Communities)	>10,000 to 2000 BCE
Early Food Producing Era (Neolithic)	circa 7000-5000 BCE
Regionalization Era (Chalcolithic- Bronze Age)	5000-2600 BCE
Integration Era (Bronze Age Urban expansion)	2600-1900 BCE
Localization Era (late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age transformation)	1900-1300 BCE

Indus Tradition (Pakistan, Western India, Afghanistan)

- basically stable climate since 9000 BCE, two major climatic systems, summer monsoon and winter cyclonic system
- diverse ecological systems that provide complementary subsistence resources as well as raw materials
- double river system, **Indus River and Ghaggar-Hakra (Saraswati) River**
- vast alluvial plains and fertile piedmont areas, rich sea coast, deserts with mineral resources and grazing areas.

Integration Era: Indus Valley Civilization, Harappan Phase 2600 to 1900 BCE.

(also known as the Indus Civilization or Harappan Culture)

- largest area covered by an early civilization
- integration of diverse ecological zones and subsistence strategies, complimentary highland and lowland areas,
- diverse resources used for internal trade as well as for external and international exchange
- **baked brick architecture**, north-south/east-west streets with **drains and wells** for water, city built on

massive platforms to protect from floods

- **latrines and bathing areas** in all parts of the cities
- no central temples or palaces identified yet, but there are large public buildings
- **standardized weight system**, cubical chert weights, probably used for **taxation**
- **no evidence for widespread warfare**

- Political Organization** –decentralized political power in city states governed by competing elites, - communities with power included landowners, merchants, and ritual specialists, but no evidence for rulers that were set apart from the general urban population
- ruling communities were linked to writing, ideology and economic power through the control of craft production.
 - hierarchical social organization reinforced through control of access to specialized craft objects, ornaments, food, housing, and probably also ritual.

Major cities

Mohenjo Daro, Sindh, Pakistan - +250 hectares, numerous mounds, possibly walled, baked brick architecture, Great Bath, Great Hall (granary), Priest-King, bronze sculpture, ring stones, Horned deity seal, stone sculpture, terracotta figurines,

Lakhanjodaro, Sindh, Pakistan, + 300 hectares, numerous mounds, wall not yet discovered, seals, bronze sculptures, bead workshops, wells, major urban center.

Harappa, Punjab, Pakistan - +150 hectares, several walled mounds with walled suburbs, craft areas, gateways, great hall (granary), circular working platforms, stone sculpture, terracotta figurines, possible textile production,

Dholavira, Gujarat, India – 100 hectares, island site, stone walled citadel, outer city wall of mud brick, stone gateways with large inscription, craft areas, reservoirs,

Rakhigarhi, Haryana, India, +300 hectares, multiple mounds, craft areas and large mudbrick and fired brick buildings, **first DNA found from one female burial**, showing evidence for indigenous population and not of people coming from outside South Asia

Ganweriwala, Punjab, Cholistan, Pakistan – 40 hectares, double mound, craft areas, seals

Major Towns: Kot Diji, Nausharo, Lothal, Kalibangan, Shortughai

Villages: Balakot, Gola Dhoru, Shikarpur, Nageshwar

General Readings

1. Kenoyer J. M. 2003. Uncovering the keys to the Lost Indus Cities. *Scientific American* July: 67-75.
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3. Kenoyer J. M. 2017. History of Stone Beads and Drilling: South Asia. Pages 125-148 in A. Kanungo (ed.) *Stone Beads of South & South-East Asia: Archaeology, Ethnography and Global Connections*. Ahmedabad and Delhi: Indian Institute of Technology-Gandhinagar & Aryan Press.
4. Kenoyer J. M. 2020. The Indus Tradition: The Integration and Diversity of Indus Cities *Purattatva* 50: 19-33.

More Detailed Readings

5. Kenoyer J. M. 2015. Textiles and Trade in South Asia during the Proto-historic and Early

- Historic Period. Pages 9-33 in B. Hildebrandt (ed.) *Silk. Trade and Exchange along the Silk Roads between Rome and China in Antiquity* Oxford: Oxbow Books.
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 7. Kenoyer J. M. 2020. Bleached Carnelian Beads of the Indus Tradition, 3rd millennium BC: Origins and Variations. Pages 169-182 in I. L. Finkel & Simpson S. J. (eds.), *In Context: The Reade Festschrift*. Oxford: Archaeopress.