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FAMILY SETUP DURING URBAN PHASE OF 2600-1900 BCE: AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN INDUS CIVILIZATION

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Abstract

First times a British Charles Mason in 1829 drew the attention about Indus Civilization. Later on, the Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro were placed on the South Asian map and many discoveries happened afterwards. Research has shown that cities, towns, villages and campsites existed and thrived from 2600 to 1900 BCE. Within the busy life, how Indus families were socially organized is one of the most important focus of this paper.

To understand the social level of women- this paper is established on the discoveries of terracotta human figurines and the issue of family setup is analyzed through contextual methodology utilizing morphological examination along with other archaeological evidences and compared with contemporary civilizations like Mesopotamia and Egypt.

The results provided a base scenario of Indus society as they were organized in fraternity and family system; living jointly in one house keeping different social status. Some females were placed high as a deity or goddess. This research recommends that a large-scale examination of cultural objects, cemeteries and grave goods may be propelled to have a flawless knowledge for social organization of Indus people.

INTRODUCTION

The role of women in family setup earliest urban societies (2600–1900 BCE), of the Indus Valley Civilization remains an area of active scholarly exploration. Due to the absence of decipherable written records, most insights are drawn from material cultural objects like figurines, seals, burials, and city layouts which offer indirect yet valuable evidence of women's social, economic, and religious roles.

Indus civilization advanced to have the intensified living patterns over the large geographical regions. The communities lived in numerous small and large cities, towns and villages. The herding activity lead them towards the nomadic way of life and lived in temporary camps. Until now seven mega metropolises having thousands of town and numerous villages are already and yet to be recorded. All the settlements were interlaced through interaction networks. The living patterns were hierarchical, the cities had intensive activities with high degree of cultural diversity. Living at one place; various groups maintained their identity and socio-commercial status. Consequently, the industries boomed, variety in cultural items manufactured and circulated. The long carnelian beads found all large small cities and towns were used by elites and high status and were copied by working class as they made terracotta copy and painted it with red color to show the similarity as

of carnelian counterpart. The documentation of both types of beads support to the notion of the social differentiation as upper and lower class family setup in Indus societies. After interpreting all basic aspects total family system, male, female was associated with any caste or clan as in contemporary social setup.

The Indus Civilization featured both urban centers and a predominantly rural population cluster where most people lived in villages, pointing to a structure deeply rooted in rural complexity and organized kinship networks (Parikh & Petrie, 2019). While its urban architecture reflects remarkable uniformity and a relative absence of visible elite symbols.

The archaeologically documented material culture indicates social organization in which the Marriage, Kinship, and intergenerational ties are understood. Elders played a pivotal role in cultural transmission, providing wisdom and reinforcing societal norms. Economic roles were diversified across family units; elite families enjoyed access to education, luxury goods, and possibly servants, while laborer families through mutual cooperation focused on shared survival tasks.

Background Studies

The literature about present issue is scanty but some Indus Scholars have mentioned partially such as Brad Chase (2018) thought about family and Indus people with reference of Kenoyer (1991b) and illustrated that different forms of social organization existed in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa (Kenoyer 1989b, 1992, 2000).

Both scholars J.M. Kenoyer and Brad C. argued that some type of lineage structure existed, and kin relations were central for establishing the key aspects like political, trade and economic integration and that competing classes of elites controlled different aspects of urban economic and social life (Kenoyer 1991a: 367–8). In this way, the large Indus cities were perhaps ruled by competing elites, such as landowners, merchants and ritual specialists.

Kinship theory has been reinterpreted in archaeological thought to account for social relations that extend beyond strict genealogical descent, emphasizing the role of *houses* and material structures in organizing social life (Beck 2007; Joyce & Gillespie 2000). According to Kinship theory (Beck 2007; Joyce et al. 2000), within families of Harappan Gujarat the ornaments, cooking vessels and livestock, like cattle, may have been transferred between families as items of marriage presentation. Intermarriages between the two settlements, the residents of Bagasra were linked with families in the Saurashtran hinterlands whereas the residents of Shikarpur were involved with more marriages linking them to Harappan settlements in Kutch (Chase 2012).

Brad Chase (2012) argues that the recipes of meal making and cooking which are exercised and passed from one generation to another in a home are significant for understanding social peculiarity. The raw materials and ingredients for the cooking procedures to be followed for the meals and material culture to events and recipes disclose the cooking skills of cuisine. Chase suggest the family (women) involvement for cooking and male for meat processing. After analysis of cut marks on bones, Chase argued that the "V" shape cut marks on the bones suggests the use of chert stone implements and the "U" shape cut marks indicate use of metal tool. The meat processed at Gola Dhoro settlement had use of both chert stone and metal tool types show the social distinctions specifically involvement of male for this process. This practice is observed ethnoarchaeologically in different regions of Sindh Pakistan as well (Personal Observations 2013, Kenoyer (1991) explains that the use and manufacture of certain objects found from the settlements, burials patterns and architecture in large cities clearly specifies the social stratification and the presence of both male and female elites within Indus communities. Indus society was composed of several elites such as merchants, ritual specialists, cultivation landlord, livestock holders, and those who controlled the resources regions of raw materials. The cities were intensively stratified. The rural settlements may had working class based on farmers, potters, fishers, miners, hunters and gatherers, and many others.

Lukacs and colleagues (1989–2017) examined dentition and skeletal pathologies to assume diet,

health, and sex-based differences within Harappan populations, providing insight into family and gender dynamics broader familial interactions, disease prevalence, and social dynamics in Indus communities (Lukacs, 1989, 1992, 1996, 2017; Lukacs & Hemphill, 1990). Lovell (2016) and Lovell & Kennedy (1989).

Sharri R. Clark (2003) significantly provides a critical examination of the anthropomorphic terracotta figurines discovered from Harappa city, to comprehend the Indus conceptions of sex, gender, and social difference within the broader ideological panorama of the civilization (Clark 2003). She further argued diverse combinations of bodily attributes reflect complex, potentially fluid Indus conceptions of sex, gender, and identity. A recent comparative study by Sajjan (2025) inspects women's roles across ancient civilizations, including the Indus Valley and demonstrated both shared frameworks and distinct cultural gender norms

Research Methodology for Present Study

The methodology for present study is based on (a) direct physical data, discovered from archaeological sites like human figurines, ornaments, daily use objects associated with storage, kitchen and eating everyday meals; (b) analytical discussion of depictions on the seal showing gender role and (c) explanations by scholars as they create the argument and illustrate given phenomenon.

The paper further relying on qualitative research having discussion and creating analytical arenas for intensive comprehension of the family setup of Indus population. Archaeological research as a methodological tool has revealed that the total five million people living villages, towns and cities must have cultural systems for integration and socioeconomic activities. This population may have social setup understood through their cities and settlements further indicating grater social stratification.

Definition of Social Stratification

The social setup of individuals in every community throughout the globe is based on three different variables as (a) age (b) gender and (c) individual. Among them the first two are natural physical forms and cannot be changed, however, the third type is societal and considered through possession of various things and/or identities such as (i) status (ii) income and (iii) power. These factors create inequality in living setup and system has explained three types of social classes: (i) the upper, (ii) the middle, and (iii) the lower class (Saunders 1990).

Anthropology and Sociology defines social stratification as 'the hierarchical structure of a society into definite classes and castes' and make divisions among the rich and poor, powerful and powerless (www.article1000.com). This explanation indicate at least four essential types of social stratification found in each society as:

- ✓ The caste is a hereditary within a same group.
- ✓ The class means a status in society either the social or monetary.
- ✓ Status in society has almost similar connotation as for the class having honor, fame and esteem in the society.
- ✓ Power is also considered a nomenclature feature of social stratification which shows the standing of any individual.

Social system in Mesopotamian Civilizations

The Mesopotamia is famous for "Green revolution or Neolithic Revolution" in Fertile Crescent Region where around 4500BCE cities appeared having Ethnic Kingdoms significantly different from each other. Later on, Mesopotamian cities of 2300 BCE greatly thrilled. The city of Uruk had a total of 50,000 people, Mari had 10,000 people and Akkad had 36,000 people living at one place within the city limits. The populations in total was divided into five social hierarchical classes as (i) Kings and Nobility, (ii) Priests and Priestesses, (iii) Upper Class, (iv)Lower Class, and (v) Slaves or workmen (figure1).

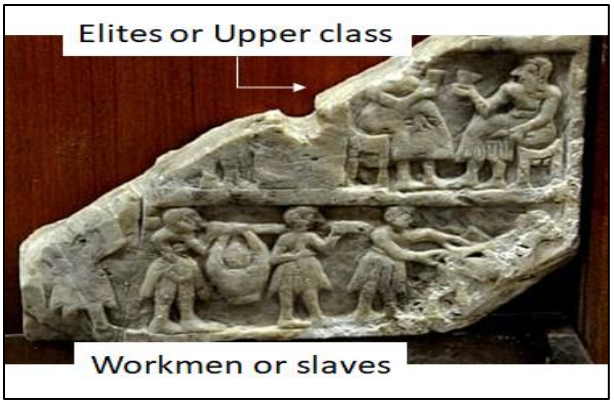


Figure1: representation of Sumerian social stratification (*C.f. Osama Shukir M.A*)

Mesopotamian families were fundamentally patriarchal, with the male head of household wielding power over property, social conduct, and legal identity (Mark, 2022). Families operated within strict legal and contractual frameworks; marriage agreements were formal, with clearly defined roles and potential consequences for non-compliance (Mark, 2022). Cuneiform documentation from Nuzi tablets to Ur III records reveals complex family networks, including land transactions, marriages, and inheritance systems (Ueda et al., 2013). The Ur III dynasty maintained state power via hierarchical household networks, where lower households were economically and politically dependent on elite ruler.

Domestic Structures commonly had central courtyard or hall surrounded by functional rooms consistent across centuries and reflecting family life and internal household organization (Hunter, 2015; Nemet-Nejat, 1998). The cuneiform tablets demonstrate marriages, loans, and land transfers. Ueda et al. (2013) reconstructed family networks in Nuzi society, revealing the concentration of property in powerful family units over time, reflecting the socio-economic dynamics of extended families (Ueda et al., 2013). Graves found in Ur indicate family-centric burial practices rooted in the household context (Bibby & Phillips, 1996).

Social system in Egyptian Civilizations

The magnificent civilization of Egypt spread on the banks of the Nile having palaces of pharaohs/ Kings, Pyramids and the Sphinx (Adhikari 2019). Egyptian Society had several classes as well. The Pharaoh was next to god having Viziers, Priest and Nobles followed by soldiers, scribes, merchant, craftsman, peasant and salves. Much of the information about their family setup and food-ways is mentioned in their writings, paintings, and carvings in the tombs and palace and is based on pictures on walls (figure2), offering trays, scrolls of hieroglyphic writings and food kept in the tombs. The artwork depicted the men-women role in food obtaining, preparation and serving procedures. Many tomb walls show organization of work showing people hunting, fishing, and working in the agricultural fields.

The Egyptologists who have extensively worked on marriage, property exchange, and residence patterns in ancient Egypt; demonstrate that in the ancient Egypt, the marriage operated as a social and economic bondage rather than a religious ceremony. It involved or based on the transfer or declaring of property between families. After such agreements, female characteristically becomes a "wife" and moved into the husband's home. They also reserved important legal and economic rights within the marriage (Janssen, 1975; Robins, 1993). David, R. (1986). McDowell, A. G. (1999). The Egyptologists David, R. (1986) discusses family structure and domestic organization. Robins, G. (1993) Provides detailed discussion of marriage contracts, property rights, and women's legal status. Additional, Janssen, J. J. (1975) contains important evidence for household economy and marriage-related property arrangements. McDowell, A. G. (1999) examines

domestic life, residence patterns, and family organization in Deir el-Medina. The studies detail the marriage in ancient Egypt which socially functioned as a domestic and economic partnership, frequently accompanied by property arrangements and household integration, with wives retaining independent legal standing (Robins, 1993; McDowell, 1999).

In the marital agreements the bride's property, and children would remain with the mother, in case of divorce (World History Encyclopedia). The *Will of Naunakhte*, dating from the 20th Dynasty, vibrantly explains female authority over inheritance. Naunakhte further illustrate property to children based on their care toward her in old age.

Royal marriage practices in ancient Egypt contain much higher occurrences of close-kin unions than those of commoners. In Roman Egyptian records, brother–sister marriages constituted notably high magnitudes and are documented approaching 15–20% of all marriages (Scheidel, 1997). The cutting-edge ancient DNA research on a non-elite individual i.e. a potter associated with Egypt's Old Kingdom (2855–2570 BCE) exposes that his genome was primarily North African in origin, however up to 20% of his ancestry was derived from populations in the eastern Fertile Crescent region. This research illustrated new insights into family and population identity in early Egyptian history (Morez Jacobs et al., 2025).

Social stratification in Indus Civilizations

The social stratification is clearly visible in the settlements and settlement setup; the residence and residence setup; the family and family setup. These all factors archaeologically can only be estimated with strong support of ethnoarchaeological analyses of the traditional communities. In this paper, data is based upon the nature and number of recorded settlement(s). Their size and residential pattern and material culture is thoroughly considered for family setup. The strontium isotope examinations from cemeteries at Harappa and Lothal, indicate residential mobility and possible matrilocal patterns suggesting complex kinship and family structures. The analysis of household as economic unit suggests the small-scale craft activities such as bead-making processes were frequently located in or near residential areas. This integration underscores that families often combined domestic life with artisanal production, contributing both to household welfare and urban economy (Parikh & Petrie, 2019).

Isotopic clues and kinship patterns show evidence for matrilocal residence patterns. Osteological and isotopic research from Harappa suggests that women were often buried near their mothers and grandmothers and men were buried near their spouses. Such patterns hint at the possibility of matrilocal residence in which husband joins the wife's family (Kenoyer, 1998; Dawn summary of archaeology 1993). The stable isotopic signatures Studies of Harappa's Cemetery R-37 show adult women as local while men non-local suggesting possible matrilocal residence systems where men moved to their wives' communities.

Indus Settlements and Populations

The Indus Valley Civilization has three main phases of cultural development such as (i) the Early Indus Phase (3300 to 2600 BCE); (ii) the Mature Indus or Urban Phase (2600 to 1900 BCE), and (iii) Late Indus Phase (1900 to 1300 BCE). During Mature Urban Phase some 1052 large and small towns and cities spread throughout the Indus Valley. Among them there were six urban centers located at different places throughout the Indus civilization. Those centers were Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa, Ganweriwala, Lakhanjodaro, Dholavera and RakhiGarhi.

Population Estimates and settlements of Indus valley

The population of the Indus Valley Civilization at its peak has frequently been estimated at over five million inhabitants (Possehl, 2002; Wright, 2010). Urban demographic reconstructions are primarily based on site area, housing density, and comparative settlement analysis.

For Mohenjo-Daro, population estimates vary among scholars. Lambrick (1967) proposed a figure of approximately 35,000 inhabitants, while Fairservis (1975) suggested a higher estimate of about 41,250 residents. Wright (2010) and other

scholars after urban analysis have generally placed the population around 40,000 individuals. The city extended over roughly 250–300 hectares, making it one of the largest urban centers of the civilization. Similarly, Harappa another large metropolitan center showed dense demographic calculations. Fairservis (1975) estimated its population at approximately 23,500, whereas Lambrick (1967) suggested a higher figure of nearly 35,000 inhabitants and covered an area of about 150 hectares, indicating planned architecture and complex civic organization.

In contrast, Lothal settlement was smaller in scale for which Rao (1979) estimated its population at around 15,000 during its peak occupation, whereas Gupta (1995) proposed conventional maximum estimate of between 2,000 and 3,000 inhabitants. These differences reflect varying interpretations of site size, occupational density, and functional character.

Several broader syntheses suggest that both Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa may each have supported populations ranging between 30,000 and 60,000 people, with Mohenjo-Daro exceeding Harappa in size and density (Possehl, 2002; Wright, 2010). When combined extensive urban and rural settlements, the total population of the Indus Valley Civilization is widely estimated to have reached up to five million individuals at its height.

Reason that Indus civilization is still complicated in various features is that like other Old World Civilizations such as Mesopotamia and Egyptian; this has no large palaces with paintings, carvings and the language is still un-deciphered. In first two civilizations as Egypt and Mesopotamia has very clear social system as their language have been read and understood perfectly.

Till now thousands of archaeological settlements within total geomorphological context of Indus Valley with large urban centers have been recorded. The settlement complexity reached its peak during Urban Phase of 2600 to 1900 BCE comprising on four tier settlement hierarchy including a huge number of cities, towns, villages and camps. The oldest one was Mehrgarh and largest one was Mohenjo-Daro making Indus Valley very popular civilization.

The few archaeological settlement has provided best fauna and flora record. Those sites are Mehrgarh (6000–2500 BCE) in Baluchistan; Mohenjo-Daro (2600–2000 BCE), and Balakot (2500–2000 BCE) in Sindh; and Harappa (2600–1900 BCE) is located in Punjab. The other sites like Lakhianjo-Daro, Amri, Chanhu-Daro, and many others also provided sufficient data on urban phase cultural development. Four towns/villages namely Poongar Bhambhro, Taloor-Ji-Bhit, Bhir & Nuhato; all locating at different corners along Thar Desert of Sindh Pakistan. There are several sites locating in Gujarat and other parts of India which has enriched with populations, social hierarchy, artisanship and dietary information. The focused settlements are Rojdi, Oriyo Timbo, Babar Kot, Farmana, Shortughai , Kunal and Balu , Loteshwar, Datrana, Vaharvo Timbo, Kanmer, Masudpur, Dabli, Chugta, Burj and Bahola (Bates 2019). The more sites are Girawad, Mitathal, Bhirrana, Karsola, Rakhigarhi, Rupnagar (Ropar) and Lothal (Joglekar, P. P., & Goyal, P. 2011). The kitchen and diet data is about (i) grains, spices and fruits; (ii) animals domesticated and hunted and (iii) freshwaters and marine fishes.

Methodological Problems in Estimating Indus Populations

Estimating total population size in Indus land remains a complex and interpretative exercise. The Indus script is still un-deciphered, and no any type of census records either has survived or discovered. As a result, demographic reconstructions rely entirely on archaeological alternatives. Some views are provided as follows:

Site Area as a Primary Variable

The most common method begins with calculating total site area mostly in hectares, followed by estimating the proportion of occupied space. However, this approach faces several difficulties, for instance, (a) not the entire mapped area was necessarily inhabited simultaneously; (b) some sectors may have been used specifically for industrial, administrative, or ritual functions which may or may not have permanent residents as part of total population; and (c) erosion,

flooding, and incomplete excavation obscure the true urban extent. For example, Mohenjo-Daro's 250–300 hectares (Wright, 2010) does not automatically suggest uniform residential occupation. Large public structures such as the so-called "Great Bath" complex and granary-like buildings reduce habitable density.

Density Factors and Household Estimates

Scholars typically apply density coefficients (persons per hectare), derived from ethnographic parallels or comparative ancient cities. For instance, the pioneer scholar like Fairservis (1975) employed relatively conservative density calculations. Lambrick (1967) assumed moderate density based on architectural spacing and Possehl (2002) suggested that densities in Indus cities may have ranged between 100–200 persons per hectare, depending on housing patterns. Nevertheless, this approach introduces several methodological problems such as (i) household size is contingent rather than documented (ii) multistory architecture as evident at Mohenjo-Daro complicates per-hectare calculations and seasonal city peripheral population fluctuation is rarely considered. For example, if Mohenjo-Daro's inhabited core covered area is approximately 200 hectares at an average density of 150 persons per hectare, the estimated population would be around 30,000. Increasing the coefficient to 200 persons per hectare raises the estimate to 40,000. Thus, relatively small changes in density assumptions produce large demographic differences. Additionally, the populations in towns, villages, and nomads also need to be understood.

Critical Evaluation of Indus Population Estimates

For the critical evaluations, several interpretative cautions must be emphasized such as, (a) Population was not static; cities expanded and contracted over time (b) occupational phases were uneven; not all sectors were inhabited simultaneously, (c) environmental shifts resulting the river course changes likely affected urban sustainability, and (d) absence of large palatial or royal structures complicates assumptions about centralized redistribution and urban provisioning. Hence, demographic estimates should be treated as heuristic models rather than fixed historical facts. Estimating the total population of the Indus Valley, it involves aggregating major cities like Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa, Dholavira and others; secondary towns; rural agricultural villages and nomadic camps.

Possehl (2002) and Wright (2010) suggest that at its Mature urban height during 2600–1900 BCE, the civilization may have supported between 1 and 5 million people across its vast territory consisting of nearly one million square kilometers. The higher population figure of 5 million residents represents a maximal estimate based on settlement density surveys and agricultural carrying capacity models. Nonetheless, this number remains probabilistic rather than definitive.

Analysis and Discussion of Indus Population

Examining the residential patterns as living at one given place undeniably needed traditional system to resolve the issue(s) and carryon life prosperously and peacefully which Indus people did. The data is slowly occurring and adding factors and further clearance of the questions and issue one may think of, for example, when a seal depicts a strong person apparently ruling over strong and wild killer animals so is the idea strength either ruling or supernatural (i.e. religious). Similarly, a clay object has been published showing a communal union (Asma &Khan 2019). Object found from Mehrgarh attest many issues about social stratification and family setup that there was a person to whom status was higher to the others (+). The figure illustrates few very important features as (i) all are provided a chair type object to sit on (ii) a figure is larger and robust and siting higher on the thrown type chair (iii) one person is sitting on the ground in front of him. In Egypt and Mesopotamia elites were provided with chairs and here in this case from Mehrgarh it is confirmed that high status elite/ priest/ruler has large chair and the status than of other elite associates is also maintained.

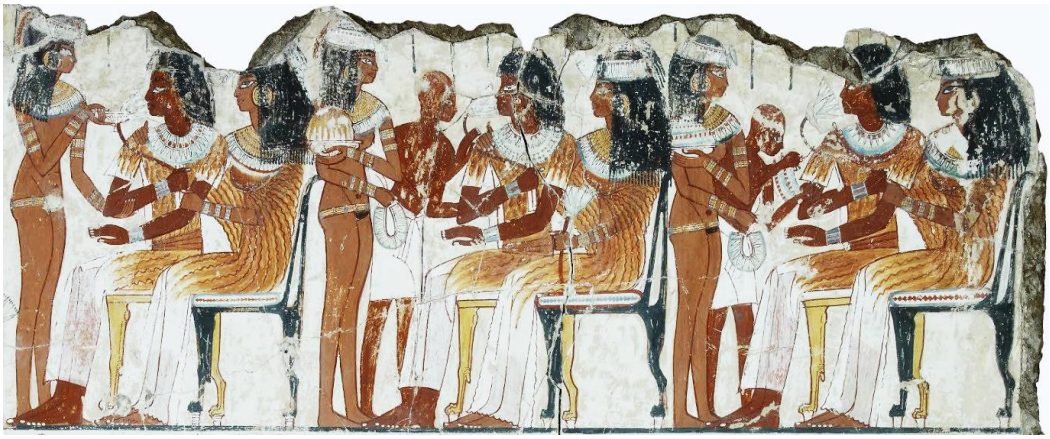


Figure2: Elite feasting pattern in Egypt

Egyptian elites are sitting on the chairs and each chair has legs as similar as mammalian setup of forelegs and hind legs as shown in figure-2 above.



Figure 3: Terracotta Object Showing community setup

During urban phase within Indus valley region several tribes existed; among them the Unicorn was the largest and found every city of Indus land. The tribes or clans were identified through their totem /icon and Icon was based on their residential location and affiliation. For instance, any clan choose the Unicorn with two basic Signs (figure 4). Later on in the same clan the fragmentation became utmost essential then the new emerging sign was added to the primary structure for new identity and social acceptance (figure 5). This way the signs grew larger along with the clan. Similarly, the highlanders liv ing in the mountainous regions had chosen the icon of hilly goat. They either put any sign or just choose the totem for their identification and social acceptance and repeated the same behavior in fragmentation case. In case the unicorn tribe observes fragmentation and decide their new identification then basic icon will remain same with little changes and addition in written identification (figure-4). The very similar behavior is still seen in Desert people for maintaining their herds of animals for example the cattle. The Desert people would put their identification sign stamped either on the neck or hind leg. In case of fragmentation; a new symbol(s) would be added to the basic icon (Mallah 2016, 2019).

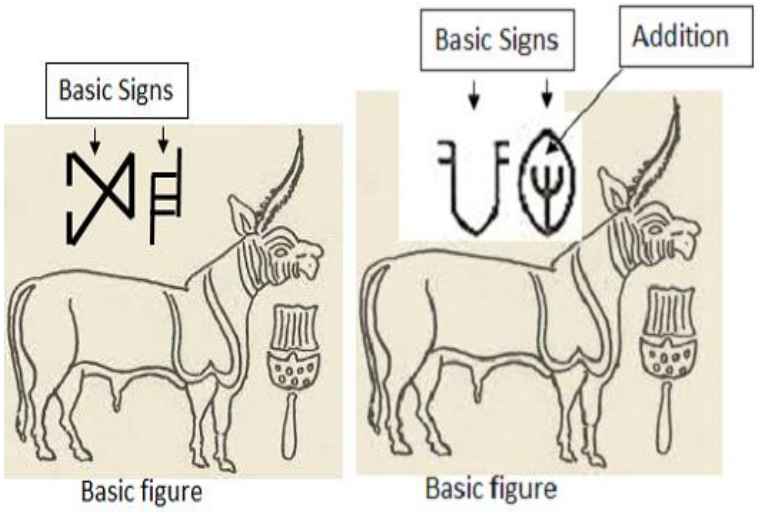


Figure4: Seals linked to Indus clan identity qualifier



Figure5: Seals linked to Indus clan identity qualifier

Till this date a total of 787 seals of unicorn from excavations of Mohenjo-Daro among which, the 612 seals associated with Unicorn icon have been recorded. John Marshall recorded 230 and E.J. H. Mackay found 382 seals. Additionally, Vats recorded 175 from Harappa cities. If city survived for seven hundred years where thirty generations appeared, then each generation may have had at least 25 segments of same clan, five for Harappa and 20 for Mohenjo-Daro. A serious research is required to comprehend the fuller picture.

Family structure of Indus society

Family setup of Indus valley communities is based on their residential pattern and physical figurines mainly made of terracotta. From Harappa, approximately 45% of figurines were identified as female, 16% as male, and 39% remain ambiguous, hinting at a nuanced cultural view of gender. Female figurines from this urban center, displayed conical breasts, headdresses, and jewelry; males, by contrast, have genital markers or subtle nipples. Full-figured, female figurines holding infants, found across sites like Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, may represent fertility themes or wealth

symbols; their frequent breakage indicates their perhaps use in any ritual cycle.



Figure-: Fully grown ritual women of Indus Valley found from Mohenjo-Daro (*with thanks from Monica A.K.2019)* https://www.differenttruths.com/the-dancing-girl-of-mohenjo-daro/

The religious and cultural significance of women in the Indus Valley Civilization has been discussed in relation to fertility symbolism, ritual representation, and social organization. Numerous terracotta female figurines recovered from major urban centers such as Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro and others reveal anatomical features, as the broad hips, prominent pellet-like breasts, and elaborate headdresses and ornaments. These female figurines represented a Mother Goddess as a fertility symbol and agricultural regeneration (Marshall 1931, Mackay 1938).

Nonetheless, on the contrary, it is argued that the emphasis on female sexuality and adornment, their identification as goddesses remains speculative till decipherment of any archeo-texts and/or finding on any secure archeo-ritual context (Possehl 2002). Additionally, it is also further argued that these figurines may instead represent domestic ritual objects, toys, or symbolic images of womanhood rather than formal deities or so on (Ratnagar 2001). Women in the Indus Valley were likely recognized visually and symbolically in ways that may reflect **fertility importance, social visibility, and possibly ritual roles**. It is more a **cultural interpretation** than a strict factual reconstruction, because much remains unknown about the civilization's internal social dynamics (Biagi 2024)

One of the most iconic artifacts associated with female form is the bronze statuette popularly known as the "Dancing Girl," discovered at Mohenjo-Daro. Measuring approximately 10.5 cm in height, this sculpture exposes a young female standing confidently, adorned with bangles, necklace, and hair arranged in an elaborate style can be viewed as an evidence of the artistic intricacy (Wheeler1968). The statuette may symbolize ritual or social identity (Possehl 2002).

Just to understand the perspective of domestic organization and kinship, women appear central to household managing and child-raising. Jonathan Mark Kenoyer (1998) highlighted that household-based craft production, particularly bead-making, textile production, and pottery

formed the backbone of Indus urban economies, in which women possibly played vital roles.

Burial practices also provide insight into social roles. Although Indus cemeteries reveal relatively modest differentiation in grave goods, some female burials contain ornaments such as bangles, beads, and shell objects interpret this pattern in female graves may reflect their identity, marital status, social respect and/or status (Possehl 2002, Ratnagar 2001).

For the economic role of a female in family setup that a vast majority of women shared industrious activities alongside men. Archaeological remains from urban and other type of settlements reveal extensive craft activities, including textile production viewed from spindle whorls, bead-making, shell ornament production, and pottery manufacture, many of these were organized at the household level (Kenoyer, 1998). These findings illustrate that women took strong part not only household level economies but contributed to wider trade networks and connected Indus cities with regions such as Mesopotamia.

The research has shown that the people of Indus valley had a joint family system almost in similar form as is perceived in contemporary South Asia. It comprises of from joint family and caste */Jate* system. At house hold level the male as a husband and father govern the family. And caste leader or tribe leader leads the clan. The clan again consists of all social levels of people where social status is made exercised.

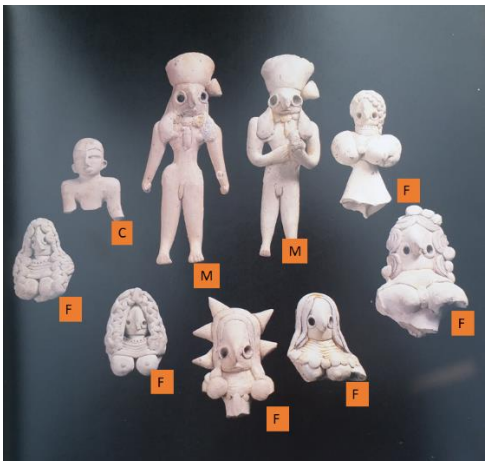


Figure6: A hypothetical highlander family of Indus civilization (M) for male (f) female and (c) for child.

Indus Male

The male figurine showing all features commonly suggest that how the people of Indus valley look like. The figurines from Highland Baluchistan portrait bit different postures than the Indus plain cities like Mohenjo-Daro of Indus River and Harappa city on the Ravi River.

The analysis of figures suggested few common features like turban, unshaven face and long hairs are provided to all figures. Nevertheless, addition of something on the left side of turban as seen in the figurines of Mehrgarh and the different styles of the turbans indicate a separate clan style. The other item was neck paraphernalia like jewels or any other identification emblem hanging in their necks also suggests the social individuality, identification and association with any caste or clan. One clan chose something on the left side of turban; Second clan chose cloth hanging on both side and Third clan chose total symmetrical like a cap.



Figure7: Males associated with different clans or communities

The turbans and bearded posture was common with different styles suggesting the either social affiliation and or clan identity.

Indus Females

The female as a wife and mother of children runs the house for daily life and help her husband wherever necessary. If the family is artisan or farmer or fisher folk; she serves as a helping hand in the given activity. It is perceived that Indus civilization had a similar family structure as in other contemporary ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia civilizations. The terracotta figurines are frequently found from all major sites and some of those figurines illustrate the social setup.



Figure 8: Elite class Indus women perhaps as goddesses

The figurines explain the social identity of females that some are well ornamented with jewelry must had elite class affiliation. Some figurines depict the concept of mother goddess in shape of light deity and having social status as elite light deity or the part of elite rituals.

The less ornamented figurines may explain the middle class and common or working class females are made in simple posture. Some of them holding or feeding the children.



Figure 9: A-Common class Indus women and B- elite class Indus women

Some females are shown with straight hairs and ocher *Shindor* at the center of forehead making of deep incised lines and put the pigment at that spot suggest variety of caste *Jati* or clan.

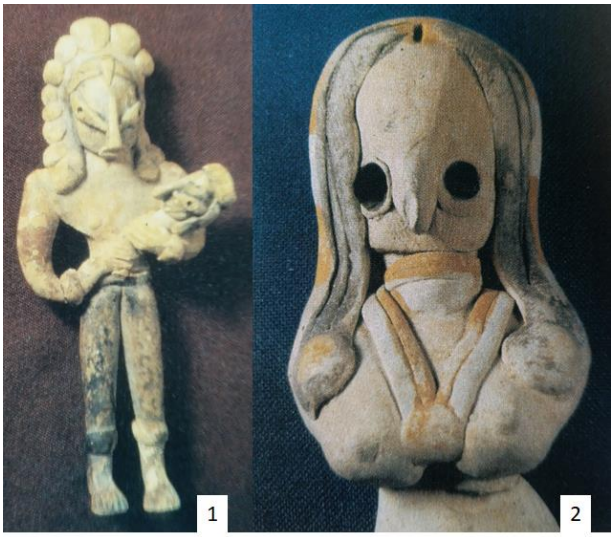


Figure 10: 1: Females with child and 2: woman with black hairs, jewelry and *Shindor* on forehead

Female as Light Deity

Women of Indus civilization had given special place in the society. It is perceived from the providence of jewelry and other costumes. The elite ladies with lots jewels and slave/simple ladies with very simple or totally without jewels; is simple notion of understanding (Fig~~). Because the affordability factor some time make and support the class structure of society. The depiction of light deity differentiating in providence of beautifying ornament also depict the class system. However, the very similar function or ritual can be performed in a same way as seen in the figure that ornamented figure and simple figure both has a hole in their bodies just above the hips is not a decorative but was perhaps provided for fixing the figure in wall or a pole for lighting purpose.



Figure 11: Indus light deities

The male and female figurines suggest that the Indus population had numerous castes and clans. Each caste or clan had further social classes engaged in numerous activities, thus formed an intensive cultural system in which nineteen clans have been suggested by J. M. Kenoyer (1998) consisting of merchants, artisan, farmers, herders, architects, astrologers and so many other types of workers and their profession carried the character of their social differentiation (Price and Feinman 1997: 402) almost in similar way as seen in other ancient civilizations like Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Social formation of Indus Population

The notion of social formation of Indus population was defined and comprehended through the analysis of figurine's manufacturing, style and use that how a anthropomorphic figure was manufactured and purpose of the use. The question is understood through the intensity and delicacy of given artifact. How a figure was built-up, the intensity of work labor and expertise of the artisan how a delicate and intensive decoration was thought-out and illustrated in given medium. The mass and the quick production is also considered to illustrated Social formation of Indus Populations. Nonetheless, the figurines indicated two broader categories as Elite Status and Commoners Status.

Elite Status: items in ancient world were made from metal, stone, marine shell and highly delicate and decorated ceramics which were used for feast. Some items are totally status item and are beyond the affording of common public. The women were highly ornamented and elaborately made in beautiful appearance and expressions. Some figurines have paranormal posture which highlighted their status and positions in family setup.

Commoners Status: items made from ceramics and stone material used as feast vessel made through simple technology and with low labor intensity may be placed at low levels of the social stratification. Such type of common objects found from all types of settlement including the camp sites which are at the bottom tier in settlement hierarchy. The women figurines were made simple with low decorative and bodily appearance. Some ladies were holdings the child along breasts indicating their married life and positions in family setup.

It is finally said here that along with other supporting physical cultural attributes, settlement pattern, the feast furniture and figurines authentically explain the stratified social system and family setup of Indus Societies. The micro residues and DNA data from certain skeletons confirm the family system and setup. There were definite classed with allocated status in social context. The clan leader from cultivated lands had lower acceptance than the city merchants owning several seals. The pottery making Kumbhar had lower status as compare to seal maker and so on in which their family associates equally helped and carryon the activity.

Conclusion

The remains recorded from Indus valley sites have demonstrated essential aspects of the Indus society. The various figurines, charred seeds, burials and terracotta pots provide the clues which lead to understand larger issues such as the social stratification and family setup. Women in the Indus Valley Civilization appear to have held significant roles across domestic, economic, and religious spheres. They were artisans, market participants, cultural symbols, and possibly ritual figures within an urban, relatively egalitarian frame. While political power remains speculative, comparative analysis suggests that women in the Indus context might have enjoyed a level of autonomy and visibility that contrasts with more hierarchical societies of the time.

The Indus people during 2600-1900BCE had highly complex society. The cultural complexity is tried to explain through food ways. Indus people had eating excellent dishes made from wheat, barley, rice, meat/mutton birds, and fishes of freshwaters and marine. They were enriched with hunted animals and had wide range to hunt their desired game. Women cooked the food and flavored with spices. As Mesopotamia and Egypt had language system(s) to document everything and explain through paintings and carvings in tombs and palaces. Indus had seals and pot depiction and figurines to explain or represent the social setup. A wide variety of cooking vessels are discovered and documented. As analyzed through present studies that the shape of cooking pot *Handi* is totally distinct and different than other pots of Indus valley. The shape and manufacturing material verifies the social stratification visibly. When simple notions are attached as:

- ✓ The simple pot without decoration for lower class
- ✓ The painted pot made with little care for elite and wealthy class
- ✓ The bronze Handi exclusively for upper class

The use wear and lipid analysis have shown the use of items and when attributes are further analyzed such as the cooking pots one is built very simple, other one decorated and the next is made from expensive exotic material involving high level technology. The other pots and objects may also illustrate the family suing objects for daily life.

Seals indicate, high priest to small merchant /trader of the society and there were 19 clans; the largest was the Unicorn clans. Indus had joint family system with little more respect to the woman. The male figurines had very variant turban styles which symbolizes the clan or different family lineage. The embellished figurines of woman suggest high priestesses and for communal rituals light deity was also in a women style. The common ladies were simple and engaged with activities along the family and raise the children as some figurines carry breast feeding kid in their hands. The initial data examination elaborated that the Indus had very complex social stratification consisting a definite class system as is seen in Egypt and Mesopotamian communities.

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