

Archaeological Sciences Centre, IIT Gandhinagar

Special talk on

**Beyond Meluhha:
Evidence for Harappans out of the Greater Indus Valley**

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Background

The Harappan or Indus Civilisation flourished between c. 2600-1900 BCE in the Indus-Ghaggar River systems, and is one among the four Bronze Age civilisations of third millennium BCE. The Harappan civilisation during its heydays encompassed an area much more than Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilisations put together. It is also well known for many features, like standardisation of pottery, bricks and weights; town planning, drainage system, seals and sealing, exploitation of various raw materials from all around the Greater Indus Valley, trade contacts with Oman and Mesopotamian region.

During the second half of third millennium BCE, the Harappans traded with Oman and Mesopotamian region as indicated by at least 72 citations from cuneiform records (written records available from Mesopotamia) mentioning contacts with "Meluhhans". Meluhhans have been identified with the Harappans based on several factors and geography mentioned in the inscriptions.

The investigations being carried out for over 35 years at several sites in Oman by different agencies and particularly by Prof. Maurizio Tosi has helped understand the role of Harappans in exploiting this region during the course of their trade relations. Dr. **Dennys Frenez**, who closely worked with Prof. Tosi will present an account of the evidences of Harappans out of greater Indus valley during this lecture to highlight their role in the trade contacts.

Abstract

This lecture presents three different case-studies that show archaeological and textual evidence testifying for the presence of individuals and small communities from the greater Indus Valley settled outside their ancestral regions.

The Indus Civilization was acknowledged almost a century ago as an independent cultural complex contemporaneous to other great Bronze Age urban civilizations in Egypt, the Near East and Central Asia. The study of interactions with other regions of Middle Asia had a central role in the research about the Indus Civilization since its very beginning. The development of urban centers in the Indus Valley during the Bronze

Age was long interpreted as a secondary phenomenon influenced by earlier civilizations in the West, but it is now clear that it represented the apex of a local tradition rooted in the Neolithic period. During these formative phases there is discontinuous evidence for long-distance interactions between the Indus Valley and the neighboring regions, but in the second half of the third millennium BC the Indus centers played a central role in defining, promoting and regulating trade exchanges across the whole Middle Asia.

The detailed study of Indus seals with cuneiform inscriptions from sites in Mesopotamia, of beautiful objects made from ivory of Asian elephant found in Central Asia and of Indus cooking pots found in interior Oman tell us about the first manifestations of that incredible entrepreneurial and dynamic spirit still characterizes India and its people.

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