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INTO HISTORY



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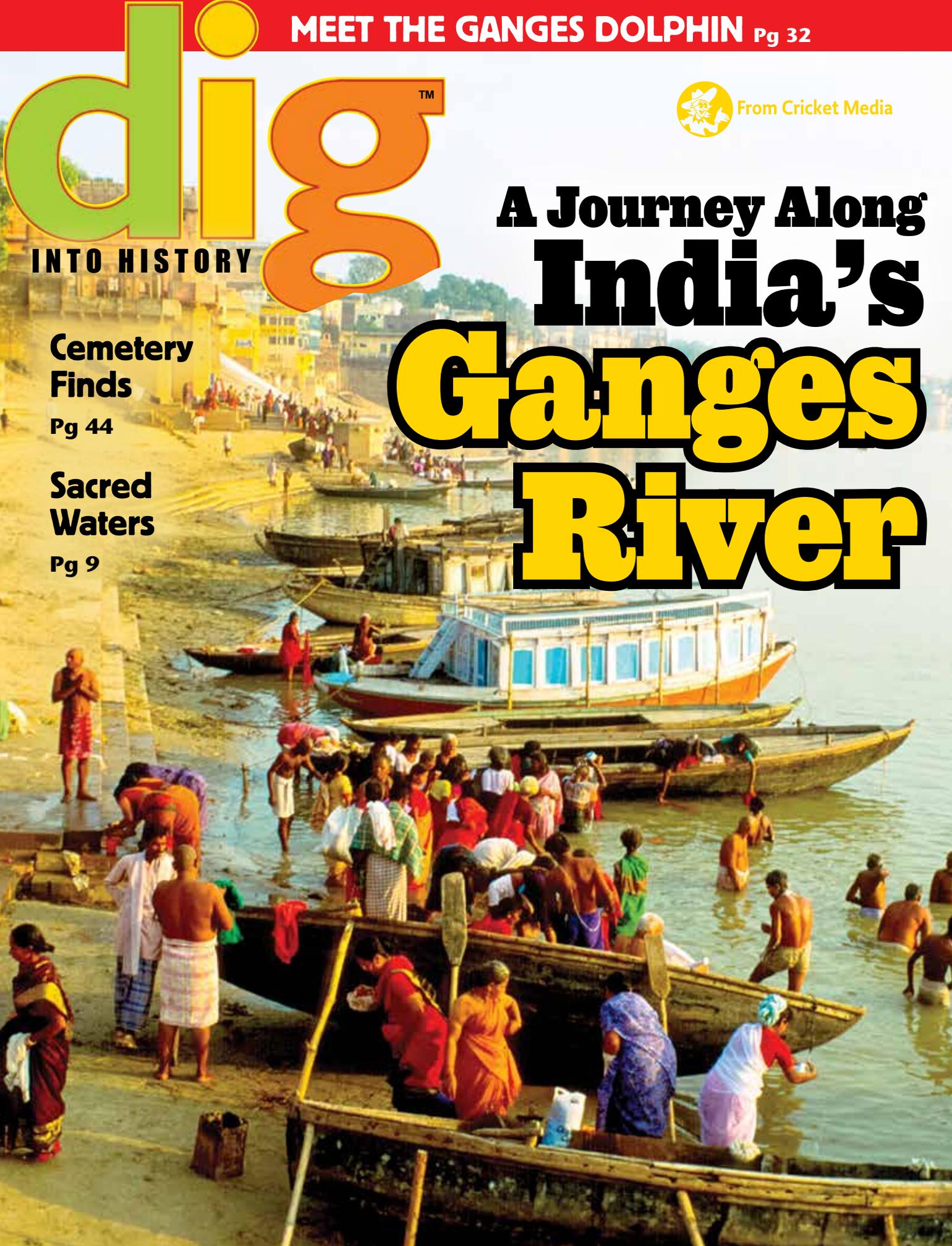
A Journey Along India's Ganges River

**Cemetery
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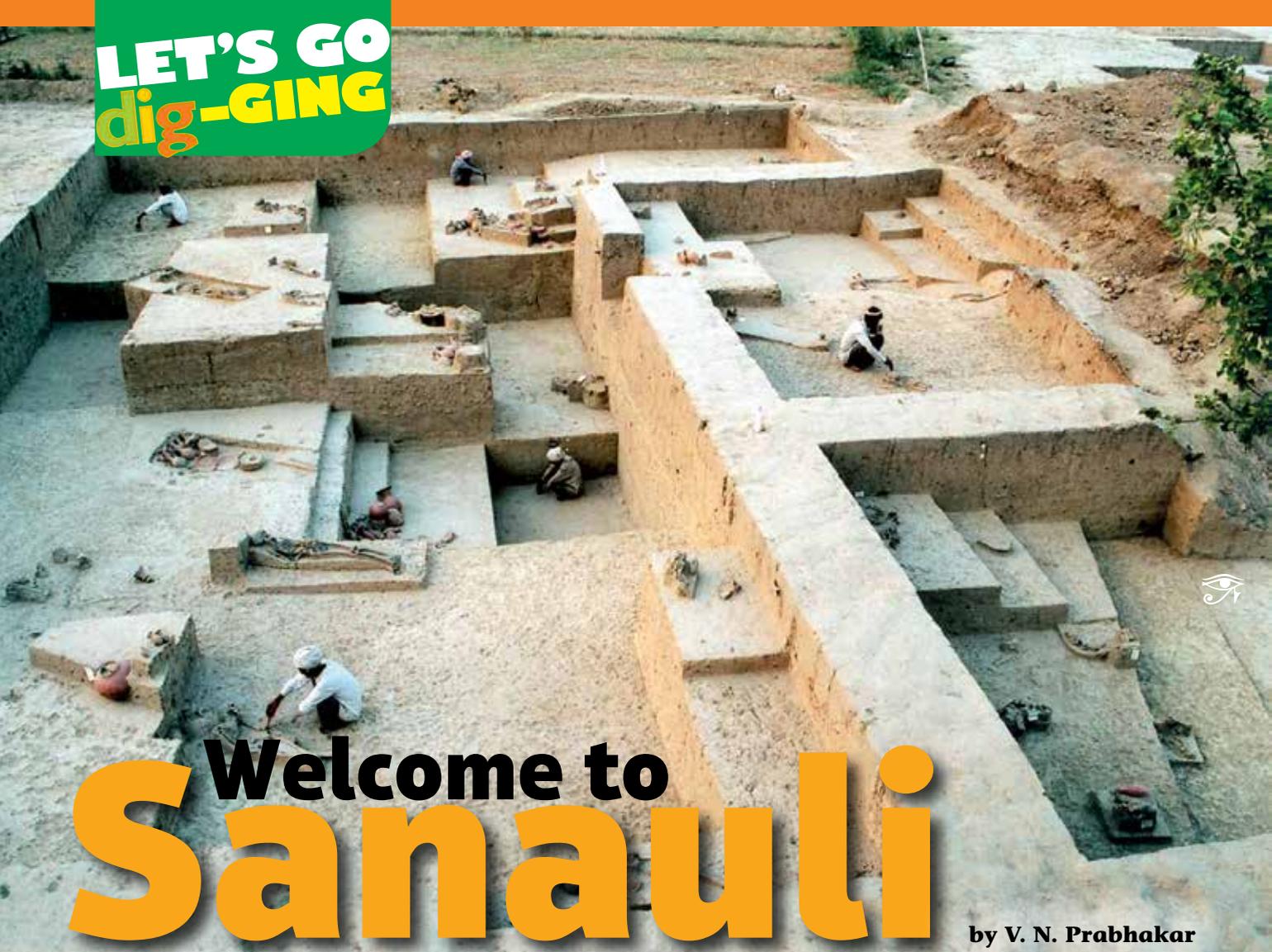
Burial at Sanauli

A surprise cemetery find just north of Delhi in India is offering clues about the customs observed by the people living in the area almost 3,000 years ago.

Here's an
illustrator's
view of a
burial at
Sanauli.

Analysis of the
uncovered
burials suggests
that pottery
vessels were
buried along
with the
deceased.

This large vessel is a
pedestaled dish, and it
was placed at the center
of the burial—see burial
illustration above.



Welcome to Sanauli

by V. N. Prabhakar

A chance discovery in June 2004 of human skeletal remains in Sanauli led to the finding of a vast **Late Harappan** cemetery just north of Delhi, India. Dating to between 1900 and 1600 B.C.E., this was a time when local Late Harappan communities were developing new settlement

patterns and trade networks. Excavations in 2005 and 2006 by Archaeological Survey of India uncovered the remains of numerous extended burials and ritual offerings, many of which were overlapping, and partly destroying earlier burials. This evidence shows that the cemetery was used over a long period of

time and that there were some changes in the types of pottery and other objects buried with the dead.

What and Who

Several categories or types of burials have been identified at Sanauli. Among them are 16 **primary burials** that have full skeletons, 46 primary burials that

Late Harappan refers to the final stage of the Harappan civilization when communities were spreading out into new regions and developing new cultural traditions. Harappan refers to one of the world's great ancient civilizations. It was located in what today is known as Pakistan and northwest India during the third millennium B.C.E. The largest cities in Pakistan are Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa; and in India, Rakhigarhi and Dholavira.

Primary burial refers to the initial burial of a human corpse or the buried remains, while a secondary burial refers to the practice of removing the remains of a corpse that initially were buried or placed elsewhere to another grave or ossuary.

This diagram identifies the burials by type.

have been disturbed, and 22 burials accompanied by pottery remains. Other finds include features that cannot be identified definitely as burials. The orientation of the burials is generally from northwest to southeast, with the head to the north. There are, however, some variations in the precise angle of the burial. (See chart at right.)

Analysis of 42 skeletal remains determined that 10 were males (with identification of two of these still doubtful); eight were females, and six were non-adults (children or youth). Interestingly, the average height for males was 66 inches; for females, 68 inches.

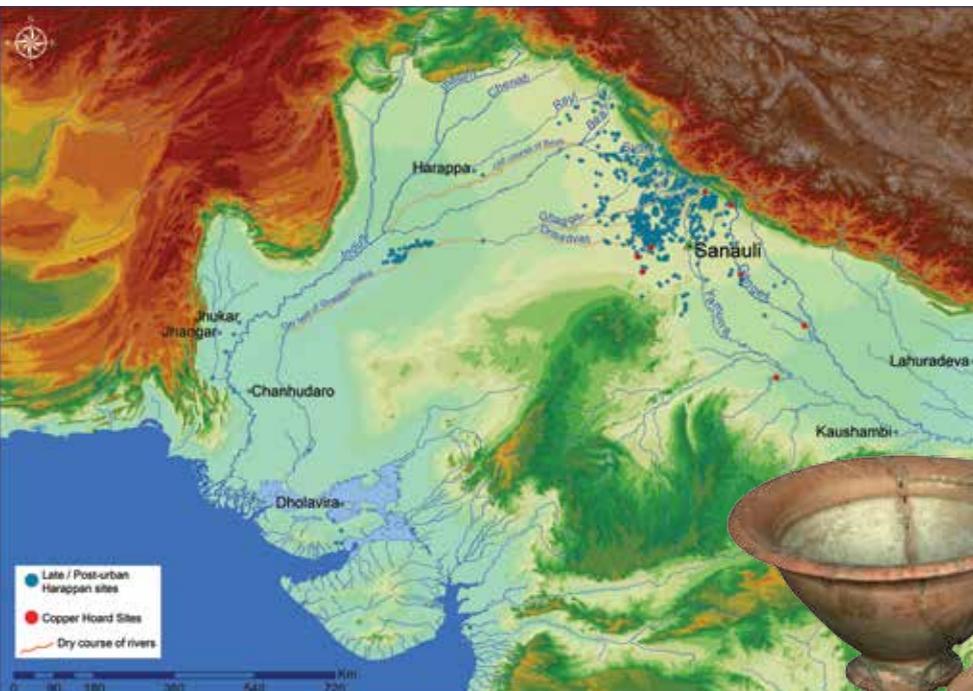
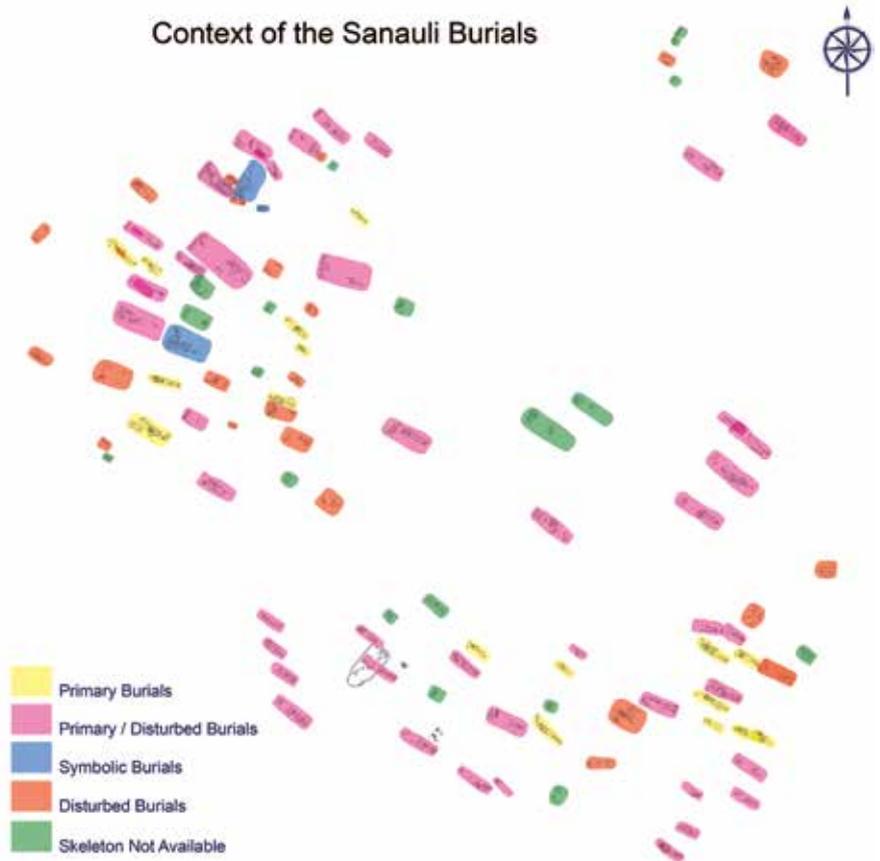
How They Did It

First, a rectangular pit was dug to accommodate the extended body

and burial offerings. Then, a group of pottery vessels—various numbers of jars, bowls, storage vessels, or pots—was set near the

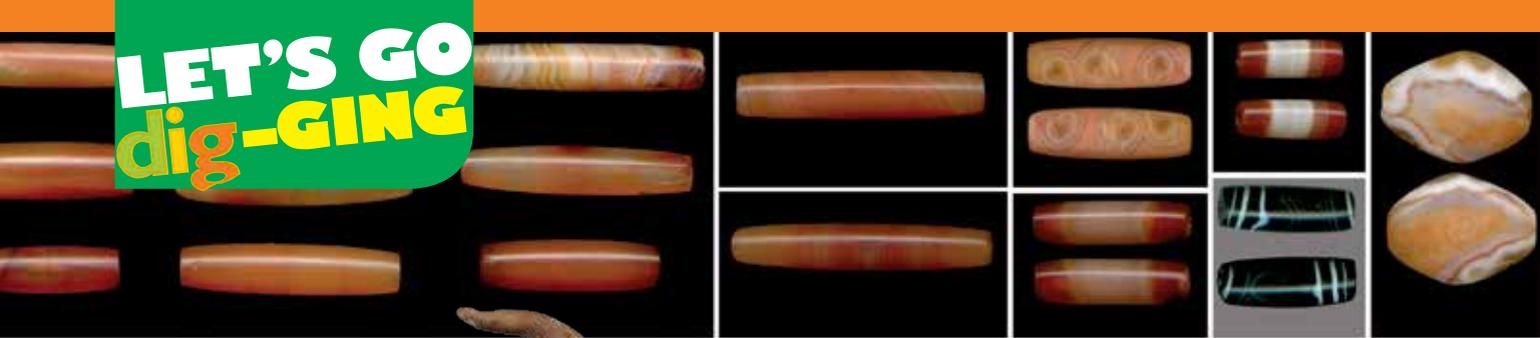
northern edge of the pit (a few pictured above). A distinctive pedestaled dish (see at left below) or offering vessel was placed at the center of the pit. Although no traces of food remains have been found in the pottery, the discovery of identical types of pottery offerings at all Indus cemeteries suggests that they

Context of the Sanauli Burials



Here you can see the site of Sanauli in relation to the Ganges and Yamuna rivers, as well as to the Gulf of Khambhat to the southwest.





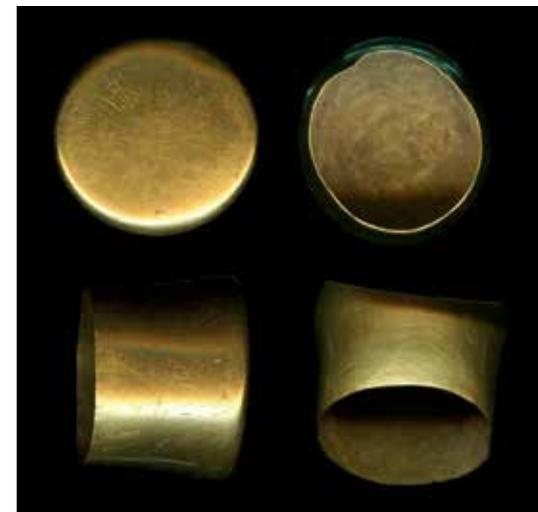
Agate beads

The bull figure served as a handle for this lid of a large jar.



Dholavira. Some new styles of beads were also discovered that suggest these people had contact with resource areas other than those living at Harappa. Another important point is that many beads were made from glazed faience, a type of high-fired ceramic. Some of these beads are plain-colored, while others are multi-colored. Some were even fashioned to replicate stone beads. Based on the fact that some burials had lots of pottery

Four views of a gold cap



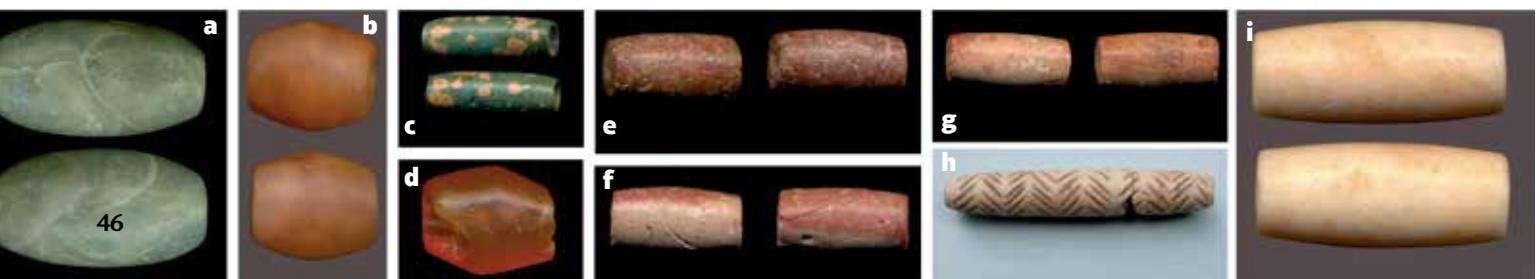
may have held food for the afterlife.

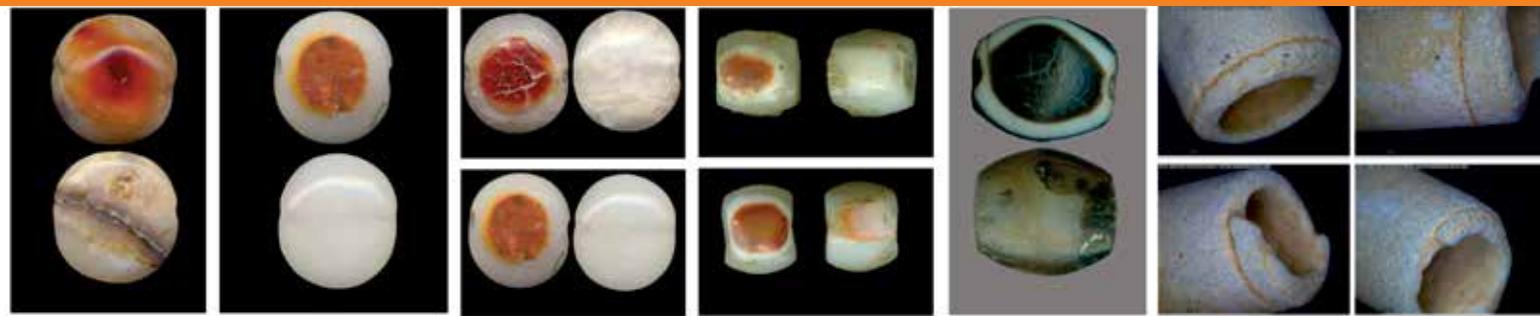
After the pottery was placed in the burial pit, the pit was partially filled, and the dead body, possibly wrapped in a shroud, was placed above the pottery offerings. Finally, the entire burial pit was filled with loose, silty soil. Similar patterns have been found at other

Harappan and Late Harappan cemeteries.

Many of the burials also included ornaments —copper and gold bangles and beads fashioned from various materials. The shape and form of the beads made from agate or red carnelian are very similar to beads found in habitation areas at the sites of Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, and

Beads of limestone (a), carnelian (b & d), serpentine (c), limestone (e-g), faience (h), sandstone (i)





Agate eye-beads

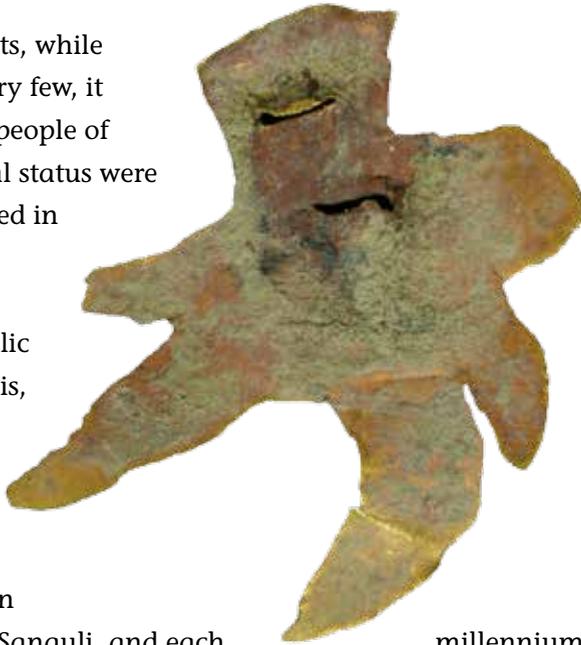
Impression of thin wire or thread used to break away the individual beads from parent faience tubes

and ornaments, while others had very few, it appears that people of different social status were all being buried in the same cemetery.

Four symbolic burials—that is, burials that include no human remains—have also been

uncovered at Sanauli, and each is unique. Three of the burials had shield-like objects that could also represent a human torso. The three were made of copper, steatite (soapstone) discs, and faience beads, respectively. These symbolic burials may have been created in memory of people whose bodies could not be recovered.

A copper sword that is associated with the Copper Hoard Culture, dating to the second



The two sides of a gold-stylized object

millennium B.C.E., was

found in one of the

burials. This type of sword and other copper objects, such as harpoons and spears, were produced and used in the upper Ganges Valley region and during the same general time period when the Late Harappan cultures were spreading into this region from the west. As the Late Harappans slowly ventured into unknown territories,

they interacted with peoples of several other cultures. And, it is the finds at Sanauli that present important evidence of this interaction.

For more about the Harappa civilization, go to Harappa.com, the leading website on the ancient Indus civilization. Founded in 1995, it has almost 2,000 pages where scholars from India, Pakistan, the US, UK, and Europe have published their work in slideshows, essays, and articles that cover the basic facts and the latest scientific research.

Faience beads

