



Fig. 7.1. Terracotta figurines from Harappa reveal the diversity of ornaments and hairstyles popular in the ancient city, thus suggesting diverse ethnic groups and social classes.

People and Professions

Chapter 7

Living in the City

In the busy marketplace of modern Harappa City, people from the surrounding countryside mix with the city dwellers, while merchants and traders hawk their wares. Leading a buffalo to market, a sunburned farm girl wearing heavy ornaments brushes past an elegantly dressed city lady wearing delicate glass bangles. A camel herder haggles with a merchant over the price of brass bells. In the background a carpet maker calls out the designs to nimble fingered apprentices as they tie woolen knots. Dusty children playing in the streets fill the air with laughter, and a mother cradles her suckling infant in the shadow of a doorway. As a meeting place for people of many different occupations and ethnic groups, modern Harappa City is probably not much different from the ancient towns and villages of the Indus civilization (fig. 7.1). However one important difference is that many large villages, towns and large cities exist within 20 kilometers of modern Harappa (fig. 7.2), while at 2600 B.C. the population density was much less. Some small Indus period sites have been discovered in the countryside near the ancient mounds of Harappa, but the nearest large cities would have been at Ganweriwala (280 km) and Rakhigarhi (350 km) (fig. 7.3).



Fig. 7.2. Tricket vendors, food stalls and carnival stands line the road to Harappa during the annual Sang pilgrimage. Thousands of villagers from nearby settlements throng to the city for the one-day festival. Women who desire children, especially sons, bring offerings for the pilgrims who will convey their prayers to the tomb of the saint Sakhi Sarvar in Batuzhistan.

In contrast to the sparsely populated countryside, the ancient Indus cities must have been very colorful and lively places. The rush of traffic streaming in through the city gates (fig. 7.4) each morning would have brought together merchants and nomads from distant regions with local fisherfolk, hunters and farmers. In addition to the rulers and traders, the city would have hosted administrators, shopkeepers and workshop owners, different classes of artisans and other professionals. Although the Indus writing has not been deciphered, we can determine much about the people living in the cities from their artifacts. Most of the communities represented in the archaeological record can be directly correlated to the types of communities found in the Early Historic cities (third century B.C.) and enumerated in the later texts.¹

Administrative and service classes of the Indus cities would have included state officials and their attendants under the control of the ruling elites (see Chap. 5). Small rooms near the gateways at Harappa and Dholavira housed gatekeepers and probably tax-collectors as well. Sweepers and garbage collectors worked along the streets and neighborhoods of the city, filling baskets with refuse to throw over the city walls, or loading cartloads of waste to be dumped at the edge of the roads leading from the city.



Fig. 7.3. A young girl carrying water from a nearby well passes a farmer bringing milk into the modern city of Rakhigarhi, India, which is built on top of an ancient city contemporaneous with Harappa. In the background a man balances on his head a cloth filled with chopped fodder for his cattle.

Some farmers may have lived within the city, walking to the fields each morning and herding livestock to nearby grazing grounds. From the numerous terracotta net weights and arrow points found in both Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, we can deduce that fisherfolk and hunters also lived inside the city.

Texts from the later Early Historical cities period identify a host of independent professionals who lived or worked in the cities, including merchants and shopkeepers, physicians, barbers, washerfolk and astrologers. Stockpiles of jewelry (fig. 7.5) and bronze weapons, as well as actual workshops and public structures indicate the presence of merchants and shopkeepers at most Indus towns and cities; bathing platforms near a large well at Harappa may have been a public washing area, possibly for washerfolk. Bronze razors, pins and pincers must have been the tools of a barber or a physician, two frequently overlapping professions. Ritual specialists must have worked with healing herbs and incantations, but such materials are not preserved in the archaeological record.

Much of the textile work may have been carried out in the villages surrounding the city, as is common throughout



Fig. 7.4. Modern reconstruction of the floor plan of the ancient southern gateway to Mound E, Harappa. Only one oxcart at a time could have passed through this gateway, but inside the city the main streets allowed two-way traffic.

the subcontinent today, but some domestic and high-quality commercial weaving may have taken place in the city itself (fig. 7.6). Although we do not know the color of Indus fabrics, we can determine the high quality of weaving and the use of wool and cotton from fabric impressions in faience or clay

and from cloth fragments preserved on silver or copper objects. It is not unlikely that the technique for block printing on fabric was practiced, but excavations have produced no concrete evidence.

Carpetmaking was probably developed by nomadic communities long before the rise of the Indus cities, but it may have been practiced in the ancient urban centers. All major Indus settlements have examples of small, curved copper blades that have been called razors, but actually may have been specialized tools for cutting the tied threads on pile carpets (fig. 7.7).



Fig. 7.5. (Left) A hoard or stockpile of jewelry at Mohenjo-daro contained this valuable necklace made up of gold beads combined with beads of agate, jasper, steatite and green stone (lizardite or grossular garnet), cat. no. 55.

Fig. 7.6. (Below) In the VS area of Mohenjo-daro, a room with specially prepared brick basins, a water-tight floor and corner drain may have been a workshop for starching or dying cloth. A brick dust bin for garbage and a square sump pit connected to a drain are visible across the street.

Fig. 7.7. (Right) Barbers and/or carpet makers may have used this type of curved copper knife from Harappa. Finely woven cloth has been wrapped around one end, possibly to make a handle.



Basketmaking and mat-weaving, which may have been domestic crafts, are well represented through impressions on hard-packed clay floors and fired clay lumps. Coiled baskets and woven mats were made from reeds and grasses, possibly using polished bone awls and spatulas. In addition to woven materials, various types of twisted cord were made from hemp or other vegetable fibers, for tying bundles of goods and supporting greenware pottery as it dried.

Well diggers, architects and brick masons were needed to keep the water sources cleared and maintain the massive city walls, gateways, drains and domestic buildings. Large wooden houses and columned verandahs were built on top of baked brick foundations by specialized carpenters (see Chap. 3, fig. 3.9). Huge doors would have been needed for the city gates, and smaller carved doors and lattice-work windows were made for brick houses (see fig. 3.13). On the basis of terracotta replicas and depictions on seals, we know that furniture produced in the cities included thrones with legs carved to imitate cattle hooves, beds with woven cording and other types of furniture inlaid with shell and stone. Furniture makers may also have made musical instruments such as drums. A different group of carpenters probably specialized in making wooden boats and oxcarts that were needed to carry out trade between the cities.

Much debris from kilns and ceramic manufacturing attests to the presence of potters, faience workers and stone-ware banglemakers living in residential neighborhoods or at the edge of the city. Copper and bronze workers also had their workshops inside the city, even though the smoke and fumes from metalworking must have been quite unbearable in the hot summers. Evidence for gold and silver working has been found in various parts of Harappa and on Mound ET it is associated with numerous such other crafts as steatite and agate beadmaking, shellworking and ivory carving.²

Stone carvers produced both large and small objects of utilitarian and symbolic function. Grinding-stones, pestles and loom weights were made for everyday use; massive ringstones and conical objects were produced for public

buildings or ritual functions. Exclusive sculptural schools may have flourished in the big cities such as Mohenjo-daro where seated animal (see cat. no. 121) and human sculptures were carved in sandstone and steatite (see cat. nos. 117-120). After the "priest-king" the most famous stone sculpture of the Indus civilization is the small male torso from Harappa (fig. 7.8).³ This figurine is a masterpiece carved from a fine-grained red sandstone, a material that was never used by later sculptors. Holes drilled in the torso attached separately carved arms and head, while the nipples and some form of shoulder ornament would have been inlaid. The technique of manufacture and general modeling conform to Harappan styles that are well represented on another male sculpture from Harappa itself (see fig. 7.9), and numerous faience animal figurines from both Harappa and Mohenjo-daro (see cat. nos. 172-175).

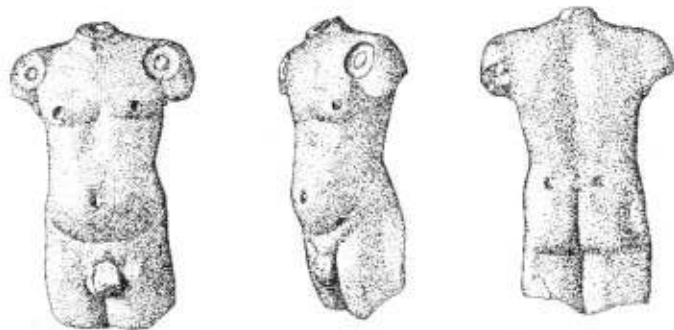


Fig. 7.8. Male torso, red sandstone, Harappa, height 8.5 cm.

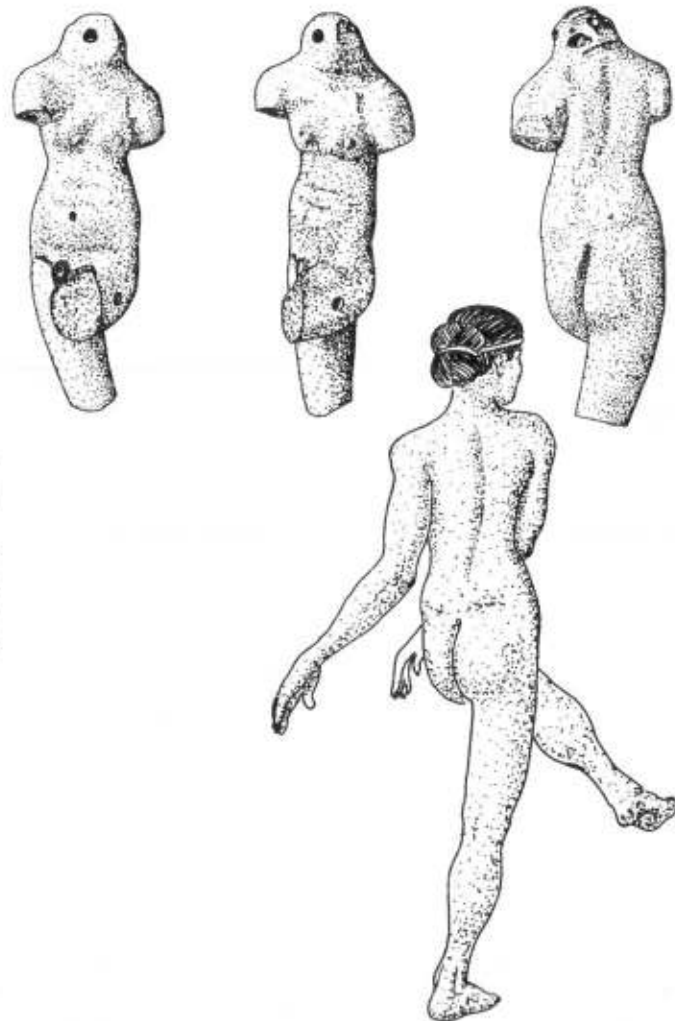


Fig. 7.9a. (Top) Twisting figure of a male dancer, gray sandstone, Harappa, height 8.5 cm.

Fig. 7.9b. (Above) Conjectural sketch of dancer from Harappa, after Marshall 1931, fig. 1.

In addition to crafts that are directly reflected in the archaeological record, other specialists living in the cities would have included perfumers, liquor and oil manufacturers, leather workers, garland makers and many other smaller scale crafts. Tiny faience bottles may have been used to hold precious perfumes and scented oils, while perforated pottery (see cat. no. 192) may indicate the preparation of brewed beverages. Each specialized craft would have been practiced by a separate group of artisans, and although related craft communities may have overlapped, recent excavations at Harappa indicate that many specialists lived or worked together in distinct neighborhoods in particular parts of the city (see Chap. 8).

A major factor in the well being of any city is the presence of amusement classes: singers, dancers, actors, musicians and prostitutes, people who provide distraction from the humdrum existence of cleaning drains, chipping agate beads or building houses. While we can not identify singers, the line of seven figures on a seal from Mohenjo-daro (see cat. no. 24) may represent a line dance or ritual procession; we think some figurines represent dancers, such as a fragmentary stone sculpture from Harappa of a male torso twisted in a classical dance pose, with one leg raised across the body and the arms outstretched (fig. 7.9a and b).⁴ Carved from gray stone, the torso has tiny dowel holes to attach the head and arms, which may have been movable.

Actors and musicians were probably quite common in the big cities, but their costumes and musical instruments have not been preserved for posterity. A terracotta mask from Mohenjo-daro (see fig. 5.5) was probably used in ritual dramas, while various terracotta puppets (see fig. 6.27 and cat. no. 132) may have been used by street performers to entertain the public during special ritual holidays or festivals. We have recovered no evidence for stringed instruments, and our only representation of a musician is on a tablet from Harappa, where a drummer is shown playing before a tiger deity.⁵ The drum is a long cylinder with membranes at either end, much like the *dholak* or *pakawaj* style drum still played in the Punjab today. Other instruments

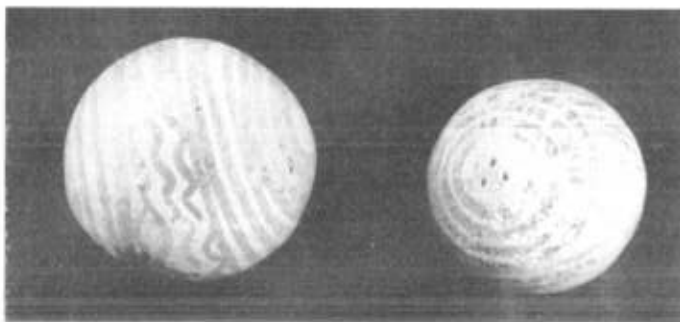


Fig. 7.10. Painted terracotta rattles from Naushero.

that may have been used for ritual as well as everyday enjoyment include the conch-shell trumpet, terracotta whistles and painted rattles (fig. 7.10, see cat. nos. 104-108). While relatively simple, these instruments effectively establish rhythm and tonal background sound.

Performances with humans may have been important for ritual and aesthetic reasons, but as is common throughout the Indus Valley today, animal races and bear-baiting become the focus of attention after the harvest is done. Terracotta toys found at most Indus settlements provide a glimpse of the pastimes that might have involved trained animals. Terracotta oxcarts with movable parts (see cat. nos. 45, 46) pulled by movable-headed oxen (see cat. no. 162) are perhaps the most common. Throughout the Indus Valley people still race oxcarts, especially in the regions around Mohenjo-daro, where on-track betting ends with large sums of money or land changing hands.

Dog figurines (fig. 7.11) and bear figurines with collars suggest that animal fights may have been another common form of entertainment. Itinerant performers who engage in dog and bear fights today often use trained animals that do not actually kill each other but simply put on a good show. The fighting dogs were also probably used in tracking and hunting down elusive game along the river's flood plain. Our information about dogs used by the Indus people comes from bones and from the figurines, which depict short-haired, small-bodied dogs that may have been bred from wild red dogs and wolves that used to inhabit parts of the Indus Valley. Some dogs were also trained to show off, such as the



Fig. 7.11. Fighting dog with a projecting collar, Mohenjo-daro, cat. no. 163.

terracotta figurine of a begging dog from Harappa that is wearing a beaded collar (fig. 7.12). Given the range of activities from hunting and fighting to performing, perhaps several types of dogs were bred in the urban centers.

Pet monkeys were also probably a common sight in the bazaars or neighborhood markets. Figurines of monkeys were made of terracotta or glazed faience (fig. 7.13), depicting one or more monkeys in various amorous or acrobatic poses (see cat. no. 175). All the monkey figurines are of the short-tailed rhesus or macaque species, but the long-tailed langurs would have been known to the Indus people living in Gujarat and the northern Punjab, because this species is quite common throughout these regions today. The fact that they did not make any figures of the long-tailed monkeys is quite intriguing, and it is also odd that no monkeys are illustrated on the seals or narrative tablets. The Harappan bias against depicting monkeys in glyptic art is one of the important differences with later Hindu art, where monkeys are a common motif and the long-tailed langur is directly associated with the deity Hanuman.

The one performance tradition that is popular in modern South Asia but is not represented on any of the Indus seals or tablets is snake-charming. Only a few individual snakes are depicted on terracotta molded tablets, and the

snake motif is included with some of the multiple animal figures, but none of these representations shows a snake-charmer interacting with the snake.

Except for a few examples, such as snake-charmers, most of the occupational specialists and professional classes that were present in the Early Historic cities have parallels in the first cities of the Indus region. However, we have no indication that during the Harappan Phase occupational specialists were organized into rigid social categories called *jati* or caste, a feature that became common only much later. The social hierarchy and stratification of different classes in the Indus cities may have been somewhat flexible, especially for individuals who wanted to change professions, exploit new resources or develop new technologies.

Images of the people who lived in ancient Mohenjodaro and Harappa can be seen in the ritual figurines and toys made from clay and bronze. Actual ornaments and utensils found in the excavations show the range of materials and styles that were used to differentiate the social classes. Burials from sites such as Harappa allow a detailed look at the physical characteristics and health of the city dwellers. Together, these different kinds of information provide a glimpse of the life of Indus people from childhood through adulthood, to old age and death.



Fig. 7.12. Begging dog with beaded collar. Harappa, cat. no. 164.

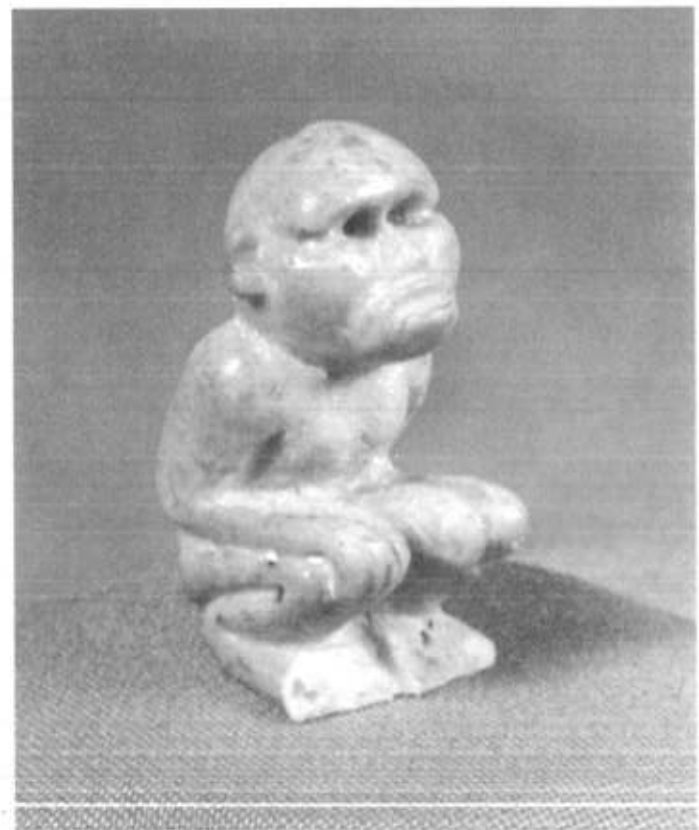


Fig. 7.13. Faience monkey figurine or amulet. Mohenjodaro, cat. no. 174.

Childbirth and Childhood

Numerous fertility symbols and ritual objects attest to the desire for children, but our most direct evidence is from tiny terracotta figurines of infants or young children. These figurines, common at most Indus sites, may have been votive offerings to pray for children or to protect them from illness. Childbirth in the Indus cities must have been joyful, but also filled with apprehension and fear for the safety and health of the child and for the mother. A sad reminder that many children and mothers must have died in childbirth is found in the burial of a mother and infant at Harappa.⁶

Most figurines of infants and children are male, possibly demonstrating a cultural bias towards the desire for male children and for their protection, a pattern that continues in many parts of the world even today. Individual votive figurines of infants may have been placed on household shrines. Many female votive figurines carry a suckling infant on the left hip, a characteristic pose among village women throughout Pakistan and India today (fig. 7.14). When held with the right arm free, a woman can continue her household work



Fig. 7.14. Female figurine holding an infant to her left breast, Mohenjo-daro, cat. no. 134.

while nursing her child. No female figurines have been found showing an infant carried in a sling at the back or side, a position that is common among some communities in the subcontinent.

Other figurines depict children playing with toys that are similar to objects found in the excavations of the cities. A tiny clay figurine of a child holding a small disc (fig. 7.15) may provide a clue to the many pottery discs found in the Indus cities. We found groups of three to seven discs in the recent excavations at Harappa (fig. 7.16) that we think were used in a game similar to one that is still played by children in villages and towns throughout northern India and Pakistan. In the modern version of this game, called *pittu*, one player throws a ball to knock down a stack of pottery discs (fig. 7.17). The defender

of the stack must quickly pile them in the graduated sequence as the rest of the children scatter in a raucous game of tag. Rules vary from region to region, but the popular game appears to have kept children amused for at least 4500 years.

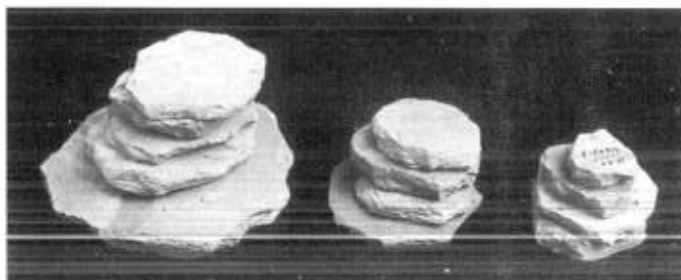
Other toys used to amuse the many children living in the cities include hollow animal figurines with wheels, such as the moveable toy ram figurine from Chanhudaro (see cat.



Fig. 7.15. (Above left) Child figurine wearing a turban and a necklace, Mohenjo-daro, cat. no. 150; child figurine with turban, holding a disc-shaped object, Mohenjo-daro, cat. no. 151.

Fig. 7.16. (Left) Chipped pottery discs made in graduated sizes have been found in recent excavations at Harappa.

Fig. 7.17. (Above) Young boys at Harappa, playing *pittu* with pottery discs.



no. 161). Terracotta tops (fig. 7.18) and clay marbles are found on the floors of courtyards and kitchen areas, where children could play under the watchful eye of the mother. Some tops are made of shell (see cat. no. 109) or have a copper tip to cause a much longer spin than the terracotta tip, whereas others have a shallow depression. Tops with depressions on the tip may have been spun on top of a thin rod as jugglers and magicians commonly do today.

Some toys may have been simply for amusement, others to teach and socialize children to their role as adults. Miniature cooking vessels made in the same design as larger cooking vessels (see cat. no. 195) would teach a child its important symbolism and prepare girls for running households. Other miniature household objects, such as toy beds (see cat. no. 152), provide a glimpse of the everyday items that were important for children.

Musical instruments were also made for children. Terracotta rattles (see fig. 7.10) and whistles shaped like a small partridge or dove (7.19) have been found at most sites in the core regions of the Indus civilization. In traditional communities in Pakistan today, rattles are often used by

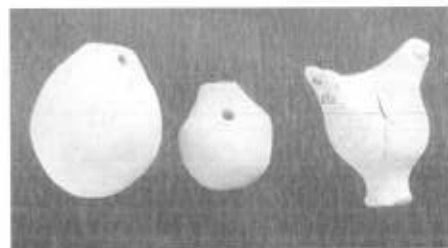


Fig. 7.18. The technique for spinning the ancient terracotta tops from Harappa.

Fig. 7.19. Hollow egg-shaped and bird figurine whistles from Naushero.

jugglers to make noise while performing, and bird whistles are often used to coax pet birds to call.

Itinerant performers probably entertained children and also helped in the socialization of children as they still do in traditional towns and villages today. Traveling from city to the countryside, these performers would have served as communication channels to the villages and distant resource areas. Masks and puppets made of clay or wood would have been used to teach children the religious myths and the powers of the gods and goddesses. Once children had learned these important stories, they would be ready to move into adult life as householders, farmers or other occupations.

Womanhood

The position of women in the cities of the Indus Valley may have been different from the role women play in modern cities of the subcontinent. Terracotta figurines of women predominate in most sites (fig. 7.20), and powerful female deities are depicted on the seals along with male deities (see cat. no. 27). These indirect indicators suggest that some women of the cities may have had important social and ritual positions and that female deities played an important role in the legitimation of beliefs and political power.

At Harappa, scholars have used genetic trait analysis to try to understand the relationships between the people buried in the same general cemetery. Initial studies suggested that many of the women may have been related to each other by descent, while the men were not strongly related.⁷ In other words, a woman was buried near her mother and grandmother, and a man was buried near his wife's ancestors rather than with his own. Further samples and more reliable statistical results are needed to confirm this initial hypothesis; however, if this pattern of matri-local burial can



Fig. 7.20. Female figurines with different head/dress styles, Harappa. From right to left, cat. nos. 136, 138, 139, 137 and another figure on the far left.

be confirmed by further studies, it would indicate the powerful position of certain women in the social order of Harappan society.

Even without such studies, however, the importance of females as symbols of religious power is supported by the fact that figurines of women or mother goddesses are more common than male figurines. The wide variety of headdresses and ornament styles depicted on the figurines may reflect the ethnic diversity of the city as well as the continuously changing styles. Many of the ornaments depicted on the figurines, both male and female, can be correlated to actual ornaments, belts, fillets, necklaces, bangles and other categories.

Hairdressing was an essential part of urban life, and many of the elaborate and oftentimes massive hair styles that we see on the figurines would have required the hands of a skilled hairdresser. We see some of these hair styles from all major Indus cities; others are peculiar to specific sites and probably reflect different ethnic communities. The rolled hair lifted high above the head and the fan-shaped headdress are styles common to both Harappa and Mohenjodaro (fig. 7.20), but Harappa had a distinctive variation with four flowers arranged on the front of the headdress (see fig. 1.7, cat. no. 133). At the side of the headdress are cup-shaped ornaments or lamps with a braided edging. These figurines are heavily adorned with multiple chokers, necklaces and belts. Such figurines with the cup-shaped projections at the side of the head used as oil lamps may represent the mother goddess. The fan-shaped headdress on the figurines originally was painted black and probably represents hair draped over a frame. The stylized flowers arranged over the forehead may represent actual flowers or flower-shaped ornaments similar to those of shell, ivory, faience and semi-precious stones. The necklaces probably represent beaded ornaments of gold, bronze, carnelian and agate. The wide belt, probably made of long carnelian beads and bronze medallions, was worn over a short skirt of finely woven cotton or woolen cloth (see Chap. 8, cat. nos. 47, 48). Such figurines were probably originally painted with red, yellow, white and black pigments as we see at Nausharo (see cat. no. 2).

In the recent excavations on Mound ET at Harappa, we found a broken figurine of a woman with the large fan-shaped headdress lying on a bed with the end of the headdress draped over the end to avoid messing it up. The care needed to maintain such hairdressing would have been beyond the means of many women, but we also see less complex, more practical styles. One female figurine has braided or curled locks of hair hanging down the side and back (see cat. no. 137). She wears a choker with pendant beads and two projecting ear ornaments, similar to those found on other figurines. A single knobbed ornament hanging at the middle of

the forehead may represent a type of conical gold ornament found in the jewelry hoards discussed later in this chapter.

Another style features hair rolled into a bun on the side of the head (see cat. no. 138), but some women did not show their hair, covering their heads with a turban decorated with minute punch marks, possibly representing beads (see cat. no. 139). Some turbaned figurines are quite fat and heavily ornamented with bangles on both wrists and upper arms, ankle bracelets and a choker (fig. 7.21). The right hand is held to the mouth and the left hand clutches the heart, an expression of amazement still typical in the subcontinent today. These turbaned figurines are common at many larger sites: the fat figurines may represent portly matrons or pregnant women.

Many figurines show women standing in a formal pose, but less highly modeled figures show women at work, preparing food and grinding grain (fig. 7.22), which continue to be a time-consuming aspect of a woman's daily routine in South Asia even today. The precise use of these figurines is uncertain, but if they were made by different communities for household rituals or children's toys, it is possible that they reflect the styles of ornaments and headdresses popular with different ethnic communities living in the cities. Bangles and necklaces are the most common types of ornaments, but the specific style and quantity of necklaces worn by a single figurine is variable.

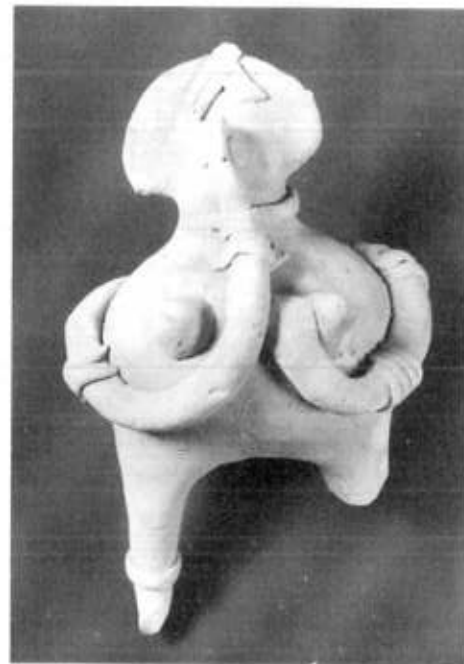


Fig. 7.21. Fat woman figurine with turbanlike headdress, Nausharo, cat. no. 142.

Figurines with elaborate headdresses and numerous layers of necklaces are usually somewhat larger than the more simple terracotta figurines. A figurine with three sets of chokers and necklaces—one of the largest found at Harappa (fig. 7.23)—has the common fan-shaped headdress with cups on both sides of the head. Although much of the headdress is missing, traces of black pigment or soot inside the cups suggest that they were filled with oil for use as a sacred lamp. It is also possible, however, that a sooty black pigment may have been used to depict black hair. The forward projecting face is made separately and attached to the body after all the ornaments had been applied. Large, heavily ornamented figurines also have been found at Mohenjo-daro (see cat. no. 135), and both sites have produced hoards of jewelry containing ornaments identical to those on these figurines.



Fig. 7.22. Seated woman grinding grain, Nausharo, cat. no. 143.

Although most figurines were made of terracotta, excavators have recovered a few bronze sculptures that render women wearing ornaments and holding an object similar to a bowl in the left hand. In one example from Mohenjo-daro, the hair is tied in a horizontal bun hanging low on the back of the neck and traces of long-almond shaped eyes are visible (fig. 7.24). Many bangles adorn the upper left arm and a few bangles are indicated above the right elbow. Because these bronze figurines are not copies of terracotta figurines, they may have been made for a

specific ethnic community or perhaps used in special rituals that required bronze votive statues. But, unlike terracotta figurines that break and are discarded, bronze can be melted and recycled for other objects. The few bronze sculptures recovered reflect a high level of skill in modeling and lost-wax casting, a well-established in the first cities that continues to the present throughout the subcontinent.



Fig. 7.23. Large terracotta figurine of a heavily adorned woman, Harappa, cat. no. 141.



Fig. 7.24. Bronze figurine of a woman wearing bangles and holding a small bowl in her right hand, Mohenjo-daro, cat. no. 144.

Manhood

Figurines of Indus men are not as varied as those of the women but do reflect several different styles of personal ornaments and hairstyles. Some terracotta figurines have turbans or headbands, but they are usually bare headed (fig. 7.25). In contrast, the carved stone sculptures (see cat. nos. 117, 118, 120) show elaborate styles of braids and finely combed hair that was often tied into a double bun or twisted bun at the back of the head. Some men may have worn additional ornaments in their hair, and one burial of an adult male at Harappa had a delicate hair ornament at the back of the head, where the bun of hair might have been (see fig. 6.45). Composed of tiny steatite beads, shell rings and a jasper bead, this ornament may have been braided with the hair and tied into a bun.

We also see the bun hair style on a miniature bronze sculpture of a male spear-thrower or dancer (fig. 7.26). Traces of eyes and nose are present. The hair is arranged in a bun on the back of the head, with a turban or long hair wrapped around the head. The twisting posture and upraised arm suggest a spear held in the right arm.

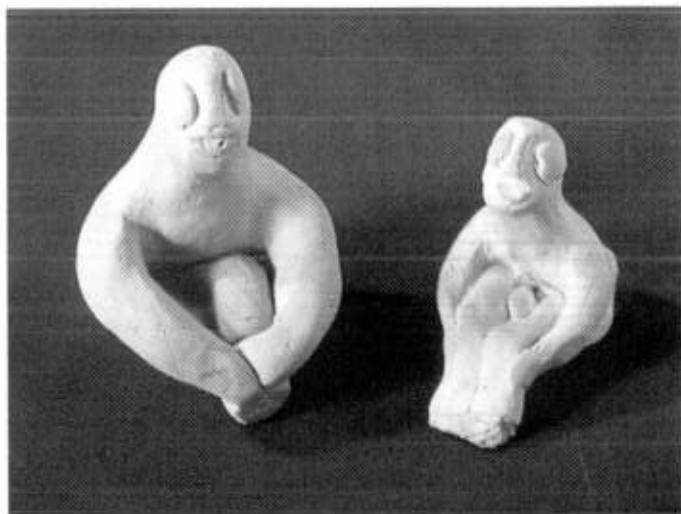
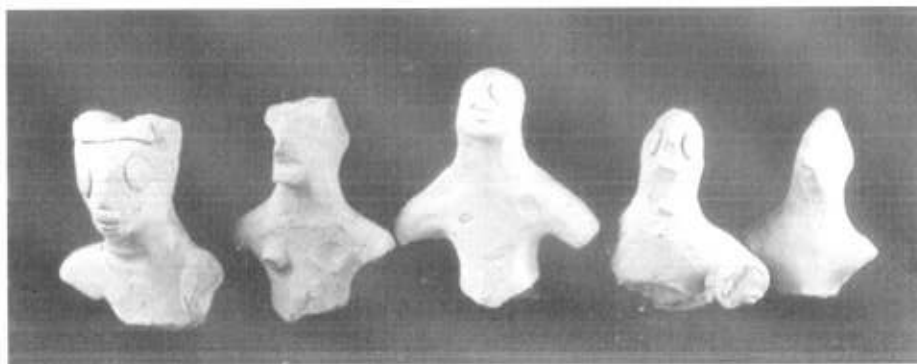


Fig. 7.25. (Above) Seated male figurines, Harappa, cat. nos. 148-149.

Fig. 7.26. (Above right) Bronze figurine of a male spear-thrower or dancer, Chanhu-daro, cat. no. 145; Joint Expedition of the American School of Indic and Iranian Studies and the Museum of Fine Arts, 1935-1936. © 1997 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Fig. 7.27. (Right) Assorted male figurines from Harappa, showing different hair and beard styles.



On some of the terracotta tablets (see cat. nos. 24, 25, 27) male figures have a long braid or matted hair hanging from the back of the head, similar to that seen on the stone sculpture of a seated figure from Mohenjo-daro (see cat. no. 119). However, this type of braid was also worn by women and is seen on female figures in narrative scenes on tablets and seals (see fig. 6.32).

Most male figurines have beards, but different styles were illustrated (fig. 7.27). A narrow beard like a goatee is seen on some figurines (see fig. 6.21); others have a closely combed and possibly waxed beard, as on a terracotta mask



(see cat. no. 122) and on the "priest-king" sculpture (see cat. no. 118). The most common form of beard is combed out and spread wide (see cat. no. 146), a style popular throughout the subcontinent until about a hundred years ago. Modeled with scented oils or beeswax these wide spreading beards are reminiscent of the projecting fur at the edge of a tiger's jowl. Many horned deities wear this kind of beard, which is clearly associated with a tiger on a terracotta mask from Harappa (see cat. no. 123).

The styles reflected in the figurines and sculptures indicate that some hair styles of men and women overlapped, but others were quite distinct. The occasional overlap of gender ornamentation is also true. Figurines of little boys and men wear necklaces with numerous pendant beads worn at the throat like a choker, a style also worn by most female figurines. Most male figurines, however, do not wear numerous graduated necklaces as do females, but exceptions include one terracotta male figurine wearing four graduated necklaces,¹⁰ and an adult male was buried at Harappa with a long string of disc beads and three graduated strands, each with a stone bead or a combination of stone and gold beads (see fig. 6.44).

Both men and women wear bangles. Although bangles are rarely found on male terracotta figurines, they are shown on seated or standing male figures on seals and narrative tablets (see cat. nos. 23, 24). Other examples of men with bangles include a male buried at Harappa who had a broken shell bangle at his left wrist¹¹ and the "priest-king" sculpture which wears an armband on the left upper arm. The overlapping use of ornaments may be confusing in carvings, but in reality, bangles worn by men and women were probably made of different materials or specific styles.

Clothing worn by men is difficult to reconstruct from terracotta figurines, because unlike the female figurines shown wearing short skirts, most male figurines are nude. This probably does not indicate that men wore no clothes, since these figurines may have been used for fertility rituals, but it does suggest different standards for male and female modesty. In contrast to the terracotta figurines, stone sculptures show men wearing a variety of garments. Usually, a long cloak or shawl was draped over the edge of the left shoulder, covering the folded legs and lower body, but leaving the right shoulder and chest bare. On the stone sculptures a lower garment is worn around the waist and drawn through the legs to be tucked in the back like the traditional *dhoti*. These garments were probably made of finely woven cotton or wool, bleached white or colored with locally available dyes, such as those traditionally used in the subcontinent: indigo (blue), madder (red), turmeric (yellow) or onion skin (brown).

Male and female hairstyles, ornamentation and dress are generally distinct, though there are areas in which the gender is not well defined. Overlapping or androgynous styles may reflect a fluidity of styles or cross-dressing, a practice common in most societies. Today in Pakistan and India, men often take the role of women for specific social and ritual purposes. A figurine from Nausharo portrays a male figurine wearing a feminine type of headdress and holding an infant to his left side (see cat. no. 4) mimicking the style of the more common female figurines (see fig. 7.14). Some illustrations on seals or in figurines may reflect men dressed as women or vice versa. One terracotta male figurine from Harappa has a beard and small nipples (common on male figurines) but wears a long skirt decorated with cone-shaped ornaments.¹⁰ Most Western scholars have associated the long skirt with females, and an example from Kalibangan shows two spear throwers (men?) fighting over a smaller skirted figure (woman?) (see fig. 6.32). However, in many Asian traditions, men wear long skirtlike garments, so we cannot define the long skirt as an exclusively feminine style. A procession of seven figures wearing long braids and long skirts is usually described as seven female figures, but unlike most depictions of females, no breasts are indicated (see cat. no. 24). In the context of the Indus cities, long braids, bangles, and skirts appear to have been worn by both men or women, and where no specific gender is depicted, such figures may represent androgynous figures.

Figurines and carvings reflect a vibrant urban society of children, women and men who wore different styles of ornaments and dress to distinguish themselves from each other and also to signal their affiliation with the Indus culture. The common use of bangles and beads can be seen as a sign of cultural and religious integration, though the specific styles and materials from which these ornaments were made distinguished people according to economic and socio-ritual status.

Allahdino Jewelry Hoard

When the late Walter Fairservis began excavating at the small site of Allahdino, near modern Karachi,¹¹ he was unaware that this was probably the estate of a powerful Indus family. During the hot summer of 1975 his excavations exposed a series of rooms and drains of semi-dressed stone (fig. 7.28). Excavators uncovered the rim of a small terracotta jar near a house, but because of other, more exciting finds left it in the ground until the following year. In 1976, when Fairservis returned to the site, heavy rains had washed away some exposed layers, and local workmen began cleaning the trenches in preparation for further excavation. As one worker cleaned the dirt that had accumulated around the small jar, he discovered a large disc bead of corroded silver protruding from the broken jar, now missing a rim.

Walter Fairservis, noticing a glint of gold, covered the treasure with dust, while he set the workmen to cleaning other areas of the trench. He announced the find to his assistant, Elizabeth J. Walters, an architecture student who helped with the drawing and excavation. Elizabeth was told to clean around the jar as if nothing was happening, while Walter sent the workmen home for a holiday—supposedly in honor of his wife's birthday.

After carefully removing the jar from the ground and bundling it into an old Chevy station wagon driven by their trusted driver Tahir Husain Khan, they drove back to Karachi, where they could examine the contents in the protection of the Hotel Metropole. The jar contained a treasure of gold, silver, bronze, agate and carnelian ornaments (figs. 7.29, 7.30). We do not know why the jar was buried or who the owner of this estate was, but since this is

one of only five major hoards to be discovered from the entire Indus region, the owner must have been rich and thus influential.

A massive belt or necklace of thirty-six long carnelian beads and bronze spacer beads had been folded tightly into the center of the jar (fig. 7.29). Only three such belts have been discovered intact, each representing the great wealth controlled by some individuals of the Indus cities. Since each carnelian bead took many days to manufacture, the total belt may have required one person over 480 working days to complete (see Chap. 8). Similar long carnelian beads traded to Mesopotamia were found in the royal burials at Ur.

Stuffed around this belt were two or three multi-strand necklaces of silver beads (see cat. no. 49), eight coils of silver wire that may have been used as rings (see cat. no. 50), fifteen agate beads, a copper bead covered with gold foil and a collection of twenty gold lumps and ornaments that had been folded up in preparation for remelting (see cat. no. 51). One silver necklace was made of eight silver discs, each having three parallel perforations to accommodate multiple strands of small silver beads. The central component, or possibly the clasp, is a moon-

shaped piece with two hollow terminals.

Wire rings for the toes or fingers are a common ornament throughout the subcontinent today, and the rings from Allahdino were made of fourteen or eighteen coils of wire. Agate beads with natural eye designs and banding were popular Harappan jewelry, and this hoard had an excellent collection, but the surfaces were covered with silver corrosion. Among the gold objects were two long ribbons or fillets and four triangular wads of gold foil that appear to have been hollow ornaments with finlike projections. The other gold pieces were smaller scraps that had been folded, hammered or melted in preparation for making new ornaments.

This jewelry hoard is much like others found at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, because it includes complete ornaments as well as partly recycled ornaments. We think the hoards found in the big cities represent the stock and partly processed materials of a goldsmith, but it is unlikely that the small settlement of Allahdino supported such a jeweler. A more plausible explanation is that the jewelry represents the hereditary ornaments of a woman or her family that had been hidden away for safekeeping.

Recently a hoard of silver ornaments including several fillets, a flower headdress and carnelian beads was found from the Early Harappan Phase site of Kunal in northern India. Such hoards in small rural settlements are witness to the great wealth accumulated by certain individuals and families. However, the fact that these individuals never returned to claim their hoard also suggests that the fate of such wealthy people was not always predictable. If they were merchants, perhaps they died while traveling. If they were wealthy landowners or political leaders, they may have been assassinated or held hostage while visiting the large urban centers.

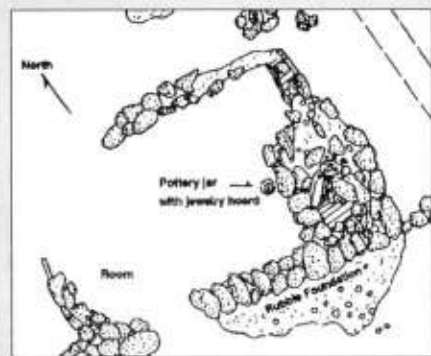


Fig. 7.28. Location of pottery jar with jewelry hoard from Allahdino.

Fig. 7.29. (Above center) Partially excavated carnelian belt and silver jewelry from Allahdino.



Fig. 7.30. Necklace or belt of carnelian and copper/bronze beads, cat. no. 48; silver necklace, cat. no. 49; coiled silver wire toe rings or finger rings, cat. no. 50; crumpled gold fillets and various pieces of gold ornaments, cat. no. 51.

Ornament Styles

Jewelry of the Indus cities reflects artistic values of the urban elite and the technical achievements of artisans working precious metals and precious stones such as agate, serpentine, turquoise and lapis lazuli (fig. 7.31). In traditional communities, ornaments are not just fashion statements, but are essential to the proper functioning of the social group. Valuable metals and stones are generally fashioned into ornaments that depict important ritual or symbolic motifs. These ornaments serve to protect the wearer, to identify the social and economic status of the wearer and as a means of storing wealth. Ornaments made from less valuable materials generally function in the same ways except that they do not necessarily represent actual wealth. Similar attitudes towards ornaments are documented from excavations and texts of the early civilizations in Mesopotamia¹² and Egypt,¹³ and we can assume that ornaments produced by artisans of the Indus cities were used in much the same manner.

Because of the important social and ritual meanings attached to ornaments, standardized designs and styles have extremely long life cycles. Nevertheless, the scope for creative variation is revealed in design and technology as well as in the combinations of ornaments worn by different individuals.

Gold fillets appear to have been a common form of hair ornament worn by both men and women. All carved stone sculptures from Mohenjo-daro (see cat. nos. 117, 118, 120) show a straight fillet around the forehead that was probably made of gold and tied with a cord at the back of the head. One gold fillet found in a house at Mohenjo-daro has holes at both ends for holding a cord, and each end is decorated with a punctated design depicting the ritual offering stand that is commonly seen on the unicorn seals (fig. 7.32). Some of these fillets have tiny holes all along the edge to attach beads or pendants, and others are made with a curved shape identical to hair ornaments worn throughout the subcontinent today (figs. 7.31, 7.34).

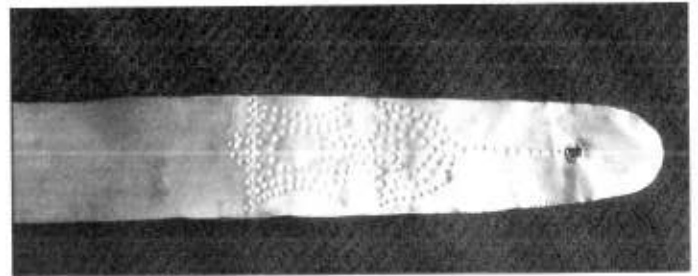
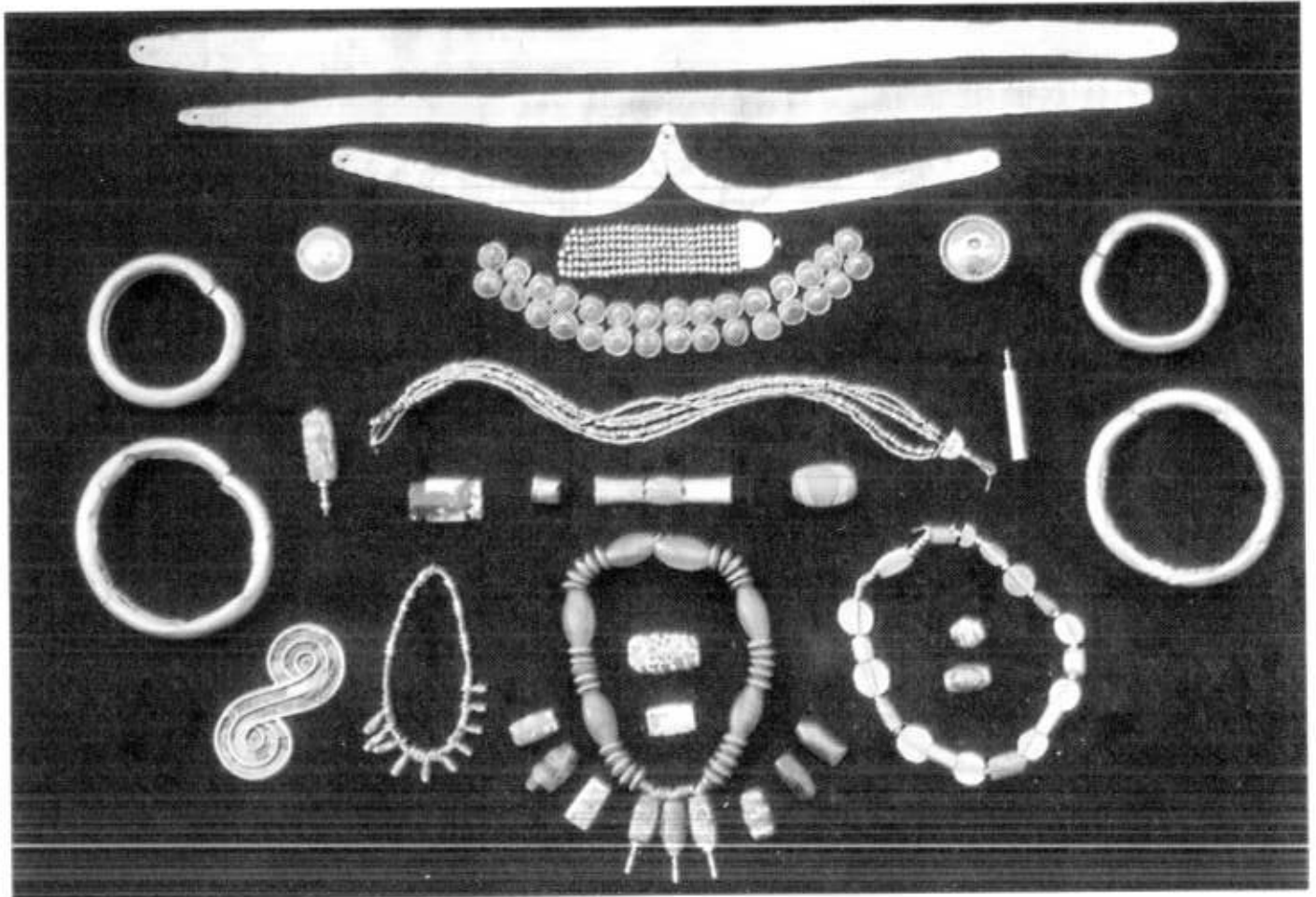


Fig. 7.31. Gold jewelry from Mohenjo-daro and Harappa.

Fig. 7.32. Detail of gold fillet with punctated design of ritual stand at both ends, cat. no. 52.



Stone beads were made from various valuable colored stones, some of which are still classified as semiprecious or precious gemstones. Beads were generally strung end to end, making a long necklace with special gems hung as pendants at the center of the necklace. This style of ornament is depicted on many terracotta and bronze female figurines and on some of the male figurines.

One jewelry hoard found in the HR area at Mohenjodaro contained necklaces and chokers that reveal the diversity of ornaments worn by some of the wealthiest Indus elite. Several necklaces that were reconstructed by the early excavators based on how the beads were found indicate a range of necklace styles. One style has pendant beads made from blue green faience, turquoise, bleached agate and gold (fig. 7.33). Another style uses a combination of paper-thin, flat gold disc beads, interspersed with beads of onyx, amazonite (microcline), turquoise and banded agate (fig. 7.34). Some beads have gold finials with additional small

spherical gold beads used as spacers. A gold-beaded choker necklace has six rows of beads with divider bars and half moon-shaped terminal (see fig. 7.31, cat. no. 57). Another multistrand necklace has five strands of tiny gold, faience and steatite beads (see fig. 7.31, cat. no. 58).

A separate hoard located in another part of the city contained different styles, reflecting the desire for unique designs and highlighting the creative abilities of the Indus artisans. One necklace has hollow biconical gold beads and barrel-shaped green stone (lizardite or grossular garnet) beads with large jasper and agate pendant beads (see fig. 7.5). The pendant agate and jasper beads are attached with thick gold wire.

A variety of gold ear ornaments has been found in some of the hoards, usually in pairs. One example is dome-shaped with a circular depression in the center for inlay (cat. no. 59). The ribbed edging is made of chiseled wire and soldered onto the body of the ornament. The hollow post is joined



Fig. 7.33. (Above) Necklace with pendant beads made from blue green faience, turquoise, bleached agate and gold, cat. no. 54.

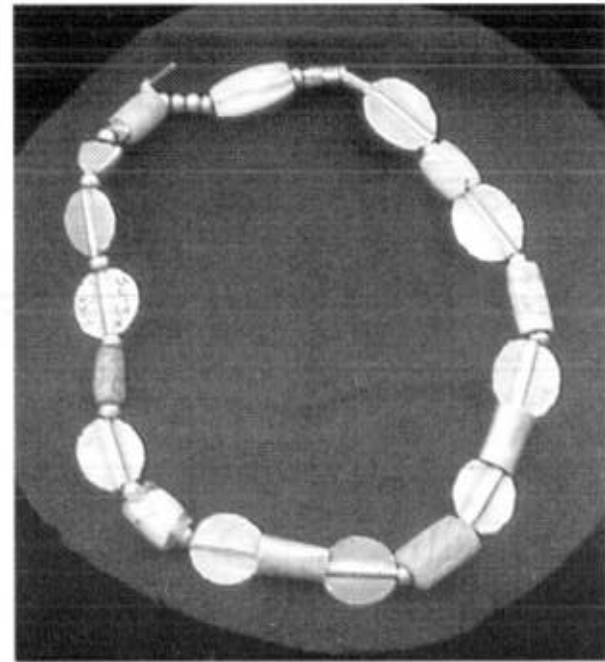
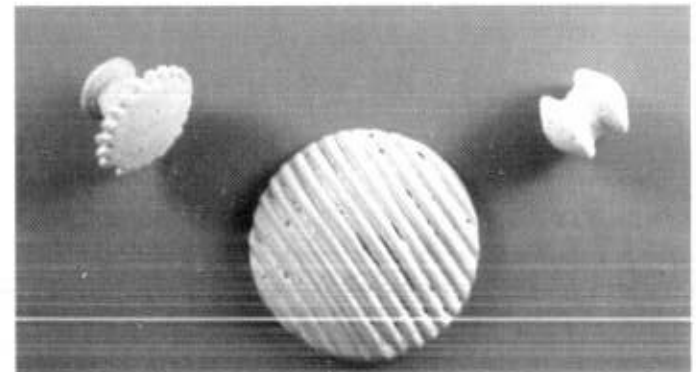


Fig. 7.34. (Above Right) Necklace made up of paper-thin flat gold disc beads, interspersed with beads of onyx, amazonite (microcline), turquoise and banded agate, cat. no. 56.

Fig. 7.35. (Right) Faience ear studs or buttons, and grooved faience ornament, Harappa, cat. nos. 85, 86, 87.



with mastic and may have had a cotton plug to keep the stud from falling off of the ear. Faience ear ornaments were made with a wide knob on the back to hold them firmly in the ear lobe (fig. 7.35).

The most elaborate examples of inlay decorating gold ornaments was composed of tiny steatite, faience and gold beads; this was found at Harappa. Two identical spiral ornaments along with a kidney-shaped piece that may have been attached to a headband or a belt as brooches were found on Mound F.¹⁴ Although much of the inlay has fallen out, the double-spiral brooch (fig. 7.36) has a design made with two lines of blue black glazed steatite and gold bead inlay. These pieces are set with mastic, in a frame made from a sheet of gold or electrum with three gold bands used as dividers. The use of inlaid components to form complex ornaments further demonstrates the creativity of the Indus artisans.

Other types of inlaid ornaments used single pieces, such as the ribbed faience disc from Harappa (see cat. no. 87),

that may have been set into a copper ornament or sewn onto clothing. Another form of inlay used flat, polished pieces of carnelian set in gold to accentuate the translucent qualities of the stone. Numerous inlaid shapes, such as droplets or circles, have been found at both Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, but we did not know how these were incorporated into ornaments until we discovered a complete pendant at Harappa in 1987 (fig. 7.37). The flat, drop-shaped carnelian inlay is held by a gold frame that has a deep channel on the exterior. Traces of black mastic present in the channel suggest that it once contained inlay, possibly tiny beads of steatite, faience, or even lapis lazuli. This ornament may have been worn on a necklace or possibly in the middle of the forehead, recalling the red vermillion that was used to decorate the part of the hair in earlier figurines (see Chap. 1, cat. no. 2). This carnelian pendant may represent the first use of an attachable red ornament on the forehead, a practice common among Hindu women who wear a colored gemstone or plastic dot (*tika*) on their forehead today.



Fig. 7.36. Double spiral brooch with steatite and gold inlay, Harappa, cat. no. 59.



Fig. 7.37. Carnelian and gold pendant or hair ornament, Harappa, cat. no. 63.

The use of forehead ornaments is clearly represented in the many terracotta female figurines, but usually these were conical shaped and were probably made of gold or silver, like the large cone-shaped gold ornament found in one of the hoards from Harappa.¹⁵ This conical ornament has a tiny loop on the inside that could be threaded with a strand of hair or attached to a headband. Fifty-four smaller gold caps were found in the same hoard (see fig. 7.38) that may have been sewn onto clothing or a belt. One famous terracotta figurine of a bearded male is shown wearing a skirt or wide belt covered with conical projections that may have been just this type of golden cap.¹⁷

Complete ornaments from the Indus culture are spectacular, but each individual bead used in these ornaments is itself a work of art and probably also had special ritual significance. Throughout Asia the red orange carnelian is a symbol of blood, power and fertility, while blue green turquoise and stones with natural eye designs are commonly used to ward off the evil powers, especially the evil-eye. Indus beadmakers developed special techniques to heat

carnelian to deepen the red color, and they were skilled at bringing out the natural designs of banded agate. Beads with horizontal banding and vertical banding were skillfully prepared from natural agates, and occasionally imitations were made by laminating different colors of shell and stone. Because spotted or banded stones with designs resembling an eye were especially popular, artisans took great care to bring out unique patterns of eye designs (see fig. 7.39).

The most highly valued eye beads were red with white lines (fig. 7.40), a color combination also used for the circular designs on the cloak of the "priest-king" sculpture (see cat. no. 118). Variegated jasper with spherical structures and some varieties of onyx found in Gujarat and Baluchistan are the only natural stones that produce such eye patterns. Because these natural stones were extremely rare, the Indus artisans developed techniques to make imitation red-and-white eye beads. Permanent white designs were bleached onto carnelian beads by painting the design with a solution of calcium carbonate, then heating the beads in a kiln. However, the whitening process weakens the surface of the bead.

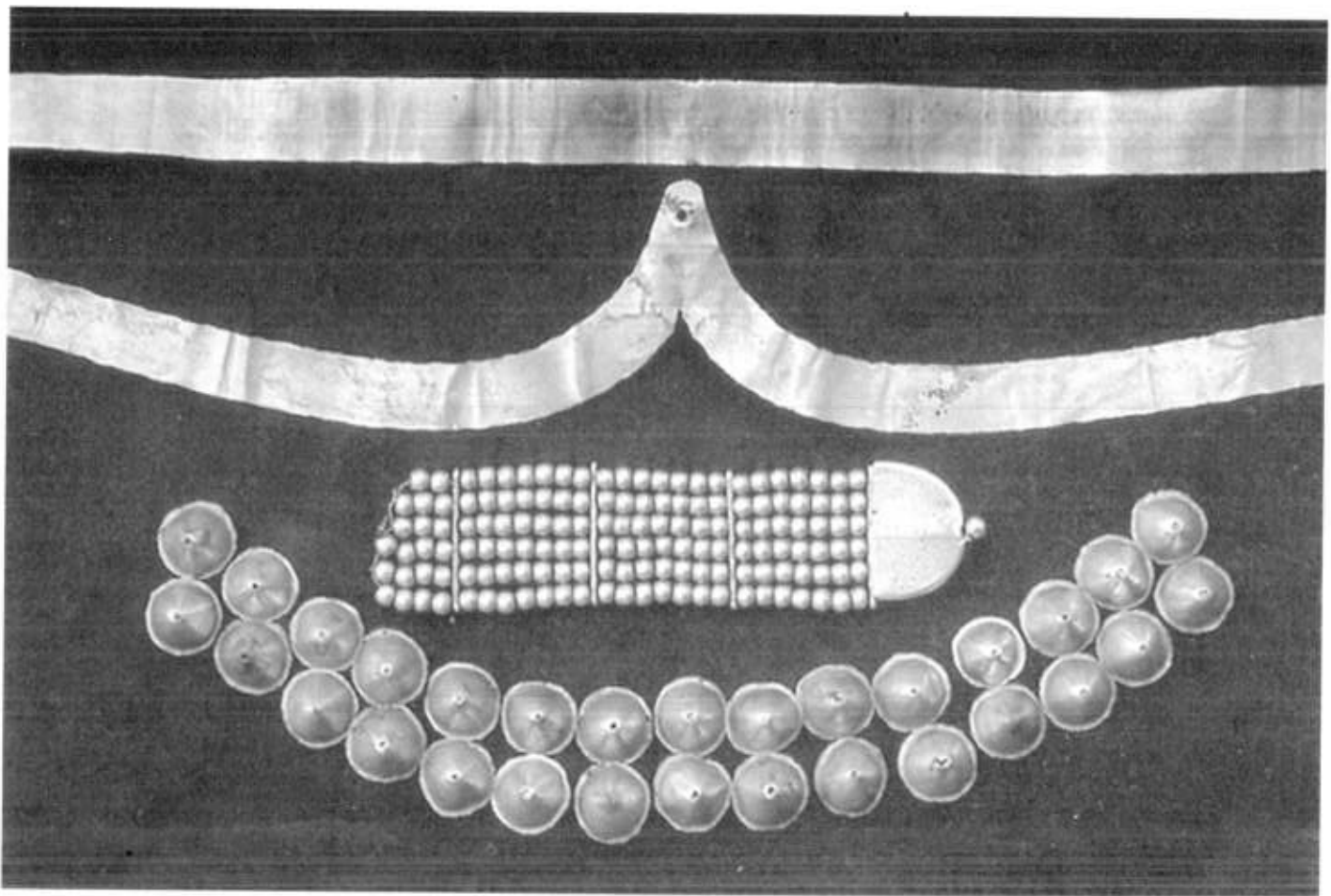


Fig. 7.38. Straight and curved gold fillets, cat. nos. 52, 53, beaded choker, cat. no. 57, and thirty hollow cap-shaped gold ornaments with tiny hoops on the inside of the rim, cat. no. 51.

and depending on the soil conditions, it can weather away after several thousand years. Early scholars often referred to such beads as etched carnelian, because the eroded design surface appeared to have been etched (fig. 7.41).

Artisans created many variations of these permanent white designs and painted them on various bead shapes. Some lenticular (shaped like a biconvex lens) beads had single eye designs on both faces (see cat. nos. 69, 70) while others had double eye designs (see cat. no. 71). Spherical beads often had three eye-motifs painted with concentric circles around the perimeter of the bead (see cat. no. 72). At Harappa an imitation eye bead was made from white and red brown faience (see cat. no. 73). This unique bead is the only example of red brown colored faience in the Indus Valley.

Whereas the bleached carnelian and faience beads were probably made for the wealthier classes, imitation eye beads

were made of terracotta or fired soapstone with red-and-white paint, materials more affordable for the common classes. Some examples imitate the lenticular single eye beads (see cat. no. 74), and others imitate the rare orbicular jasper that has a red matrix and white circles (see cat. no. 75). Others were made with transverse spiraling bands to imitate natural banded agate (see cat. no. 76). The reproduction of identical shapes and styles using different raw materials helps to unify people within a single culture and belief system, even though not everyone enjoys the same wealth or status. Even today many people wear imitation gemstones as symbols of beauty or wealth, but only the affluent wear real gems.

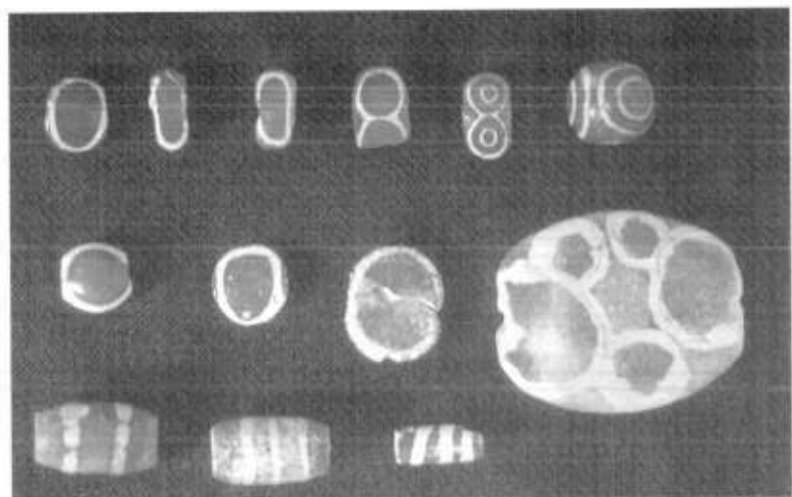


Fig. 7.39. (Left) Agate, jasper, green serpentine beads made in different shapes and designs, cat. no. 62.

Fig. 7.40. (Above) Red-and-white decorated beads made from carnelian, painted steatite and faience, Harappa, cat. nos. 69-76.

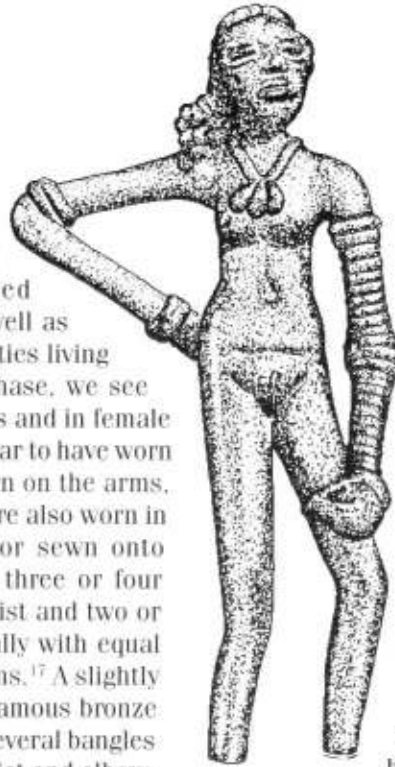


Fig. 7.41. After 4500 years, the original white bleached design on this carnelian bead from Balakot has weathered away, leaving the appearance of an etched design.

Bangle Styles

Bangle styles also demonstrate how the Indus artisans produced ornaments that served to unite as well as to differentiate the various communities living in the cities. From the Harappan Phase, we see bangles primarily on female figurines and in female burials, although some males do appear to have worn bangles. Bangles were generally worn on the arms, but circlets that look like bangles were also worn in the hair, on belts, on the ankles or sewn onto clothing. When worn on the arms, three or four bangles were often placed on the wrist and two or more bangles above the elbow, usually with equal numbers of bangles worn on both arms.¹⁷ A slightly modified pattern is depicted on the famous bronze figurines from Mohenjo-daro, where several bangles were worn on the right arm at the wrist and elbow, but the left arm was filled with bangles from wrist to shoulder (see fig. 7.42).¹⁸

Although figurines and seals show how bangles were worn, they do not permit identification of the types of bangles or the combinations of design and color. The only bangles found in the cemetery excavations at Harappa are white shell bangles that were worn on the left arms of middle-aged adult women (ages 35-55). Sometimes they were worn on the lower arm or wrist, and in two cases bangles were worn both above and below the elbow. The bangles in the earliest burials,



around 2600 B.C. (fig. 7.43) are slightly wider than those found in later burials, about 2400 B.C., and the thinnest bangles are found in the latest burials around 2000 B.C.

The decreasing width of shell bangles worn by women buried in the cemetery at Harappa may indicate that over several generations these women became less and less involved in heavy manual labor.¹⁹ Thin-shell bangles are easily broken when chopping wood or loading oxcarts, whereas wide, heavy shell ornaments stand up to repeated battering. At Harappa and many other Indus sites, wide shell bangles have been found in various neighborhoods, but never in the burials (fig. 7.44). These wide shell bangles are also incised with the standard Indus chevron, but they may have been worn by women who were involved in heavy labor, as is common among nomads or farmers today. However, even though the width of the bangles changed, all were incised with the same style of chevron motif oriented in the same direction. There is only one example of a middle-aged adult male with a broken shell bangle that appears to have been worn on the left wrist.²⁰ None of the individuals buried at Harappa or any other reported site has been found wearing terracotta, faience, copper or stoneware bangles. Such ornaments may have been removed or broken at death, a practice that is common in later Hindu rituals.

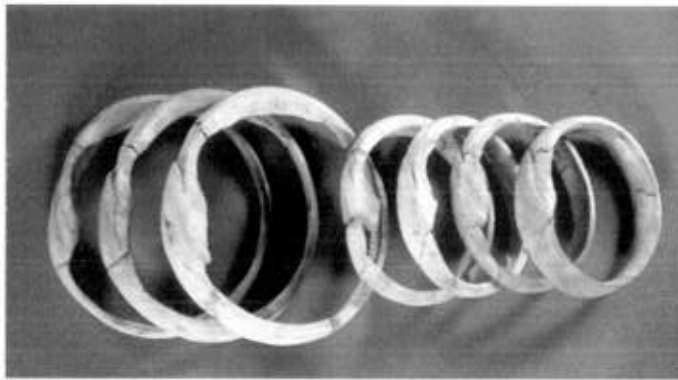


Fig. 7.42. (Above center) Bronze statuette of a woman wearing bangles and holding a small bowl in her left hand, Mohenjo-daro, National Museum, New Delhi.

Fig. 7.43. (Above) Shell bangles from burial of an elderly woman from Harappa, cat. no. 90.

Fig. 7.44. (Right) Wide bangle made from a single conch shell and carved with a chevron motif, Harappa, cat. no. 91.



Shell bangles appear to have been used as a symbol that expressed an overarching unity as well as gender and possibly ethnic distinctions. The distinctive style of shell bangles with incised chevron design are found at most settlements of the Harappan Phase, but the limited quantity of such bangles indicates that they were not available to all members of the Indus society.

The extensive manufacture and use of other types of bangles in contexts outside of burials is also quite significant. Glazed faience bangles were made in a variety of styles and widths. Wide, white glazed faience bangles with a single chevron incised on the exterior imitated shell bangles. A more common style is the blue green glazed bangle decorated with multiple chevron and herring-bone designs repeated around the entire circlet. The finest design of faience bangle is a kidney or womb-shaped circlet, imitating the shape of some shell bangles with the exterior decorated by deeply carved cogs or ribbing (fig. 7.45).

Terracotta bangles are both the most common and the most varied. Thousands of bangle fragments have been recovered from the recent excavations at Harappa, and

thousands more are scattered over the surface of the mounds. Many terracotta circles were setters for firing pottery, distinguished from bangles by crude shape. As with the shell and faience ornaments, terracotta bangles range from wide to narrow and plain to highly decorated (fig. 7.46). The surfaces were sometimes modified by pinching, incising or painting. Red or black pigment was commonly used to make diagonal lines or a single wide band on the exterior of the bangle (see cat. no. 95).

Most terracotta bangles were formed by hand, but those made on a potter's wheel are perfectly circular and have graduated diameters to fit different sizes of hands (see cat. no. 94). However, one style of bangle was always made the same size, between 5.5 and 6 cm interior diameter with a highly burnished surface fired to a red or a gray black color. Generally referred to as stoneware bangles because they were fired at very high temperatures, these standardized ornaments were almost always inscribed on the outside edge with minute signs of the Indus script (fig. 7.47). Relatively few stoneware bangles were made, probably to be worn as a badge of office or ritual ornament. Since they were made

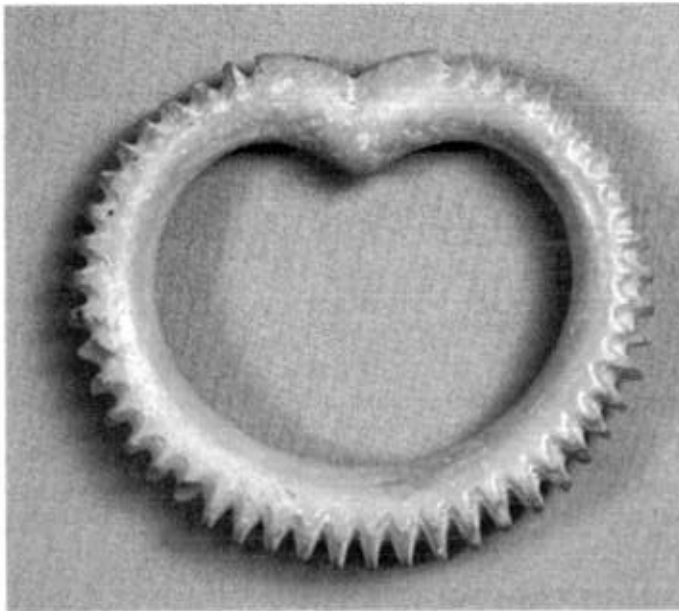
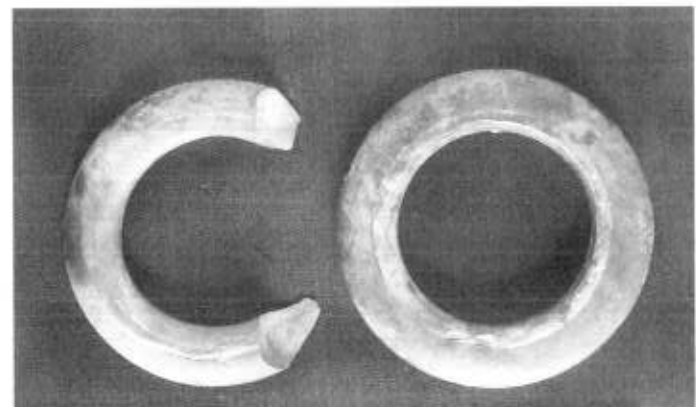
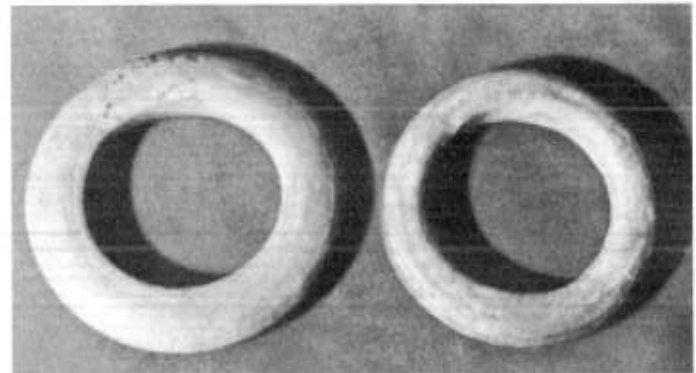


Fig. 7.45. (Above) Faience bangle made in the shape of a shell bangle or the stylized "womb" motif, Harappa, cat. no. 92.

Fig. 7.46. (Above right) Fine terracotta bangles, Harappa, cat. nos. 94, 95.

Fig. 7.47. (Right) Stoneware bangle with highly burnished surface, Mohenjo-daro, cat. no. 93 on right.



in standardized sizes that would not have fit a large hand, it is possible that they were attached to a necklace or worn in the hair instead.

While ceramic and shell bangles were invariably made as circlets in order to improve their strength, metal bangles usually had an open edge to slip over any size of wrist. Copper or bronze bangles were generally made as solid bars curved to fit the shape of the wrist (fig. 7.48), but some examples are hollow, making a lighter and yet equally impressive ornament. Gold bangles always had a hollow core to be easily twisted open and shut to fit over the wrist or ankle (fig. 7.49).

From terracotta to stoneware and gold, bangles made from various raw materials were worn by men, women and children in all of the far-flung settlements of the Indus region. Some styles were only found at the largest cities, and specific styles may have changed over time, but once the tradition of wearing bangles was established during the Neolithic period, about 6500 B.C., it remained an important form of symbolic ornamentation throughout the subcontinent.

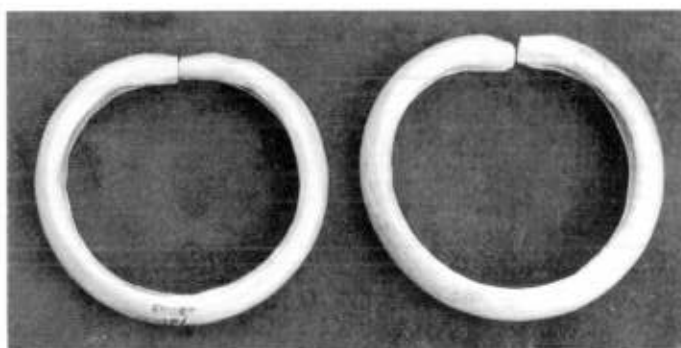


Fig. 7.48. Bronze bangles from Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, cat. nos. 96, 97.

Fig. 7.49. Hollow bangles of hammered sheet gold, Mohenjo-daro, cat. nos. 98, 99.

Today, throughout India and Pakistan, children wear specific types of bangles as amulets for health and to enhance beauty. A young woman wears bangles during courtship, and at marriage these bangles are replaced by different types of bangles to symbolize her changed status. Throughout a woman's life, bangles are worn as ornaments and also to protect and preserve her family's well being. These bangles are removed or broken at the death of her husband, and all valuable ornaments are passed on to subsequent generations. Men often wear bangles for physical protection in battle, for amuletic purposes, for defining status and ethnic affiliation and simply as ornaments.

In the Indus cities, ornaments such as bangles and beads would have been accessible to all members of the society, thereby reinforcing important belief systems and the social order. Although these ornaments were made from different raw materials, many would be indistinguishable when viewed from a distance and would communicate similar symbolic messages. Close examination, however, could distinguish the precise nature of the ornament, its relative value and presumably the economic and socio-ritual status of the wearer. Ranking or stratification within the society as a whole would be reinforced by the relative value of the raw materials themselves. The manufacture of similar styles of bangles and beads from different raw materials is not unique to the Indus civilization, but only in the Indus cities do we find such a complex hierarchy of materials combined with unifying symbols.

During the period of the Indus cities (2600-1900 B.C.), the need for unique and appealing objects for ritual and political status resulted in the invention of many new technologies, such as the coloring of carnelian beads and stoneware bangle making, while old technologies were taken to new levels of complexity. Faience technology became more refined and ceramic production saw the introduction of new techniques and styles of production. Copper and bronze metallurgy became highly specialized for the production of tools, ornaments and utensils. The new products and imitations resulting from these developments were distributed far and wide throughout the Indus region, but the actual developments in technology were probably taking place in the largest cities, such as Harappa and Mohenjo-daro.

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Endnotes

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