

FURTHER EXCAVATIONS AT LOTHAL

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A summary of the results of the excavation conducted during the years 1955-56 at Lothal, the famous Harappa settlement at the head of the Gulf of Cambay, appeared in this journal (Nos. 3-4) in 1957. Since then the site has been subjected to further large-scale excavation (Pl. I, Fig. 1) year after year with important results. To mention only a few, Lothal is found to have been an important port on the Kathiawar coast with a large dock built for handling cargo and servicing ships. It was a well-planned town with all the civic amenities known to the age and a busy emporium for international trade. Following the clue afforded by Lothal regarding the maritime activities of the Indus people a systematic survey of the Gujarat coast was undertaken, as a result of which several Harappan ports have been located (Fig. A). Among the small finds from Lothal indicating a flourishing trade between the Indus and Sumerian civilizations is a circular steatite seal of Persian Gulf origin.

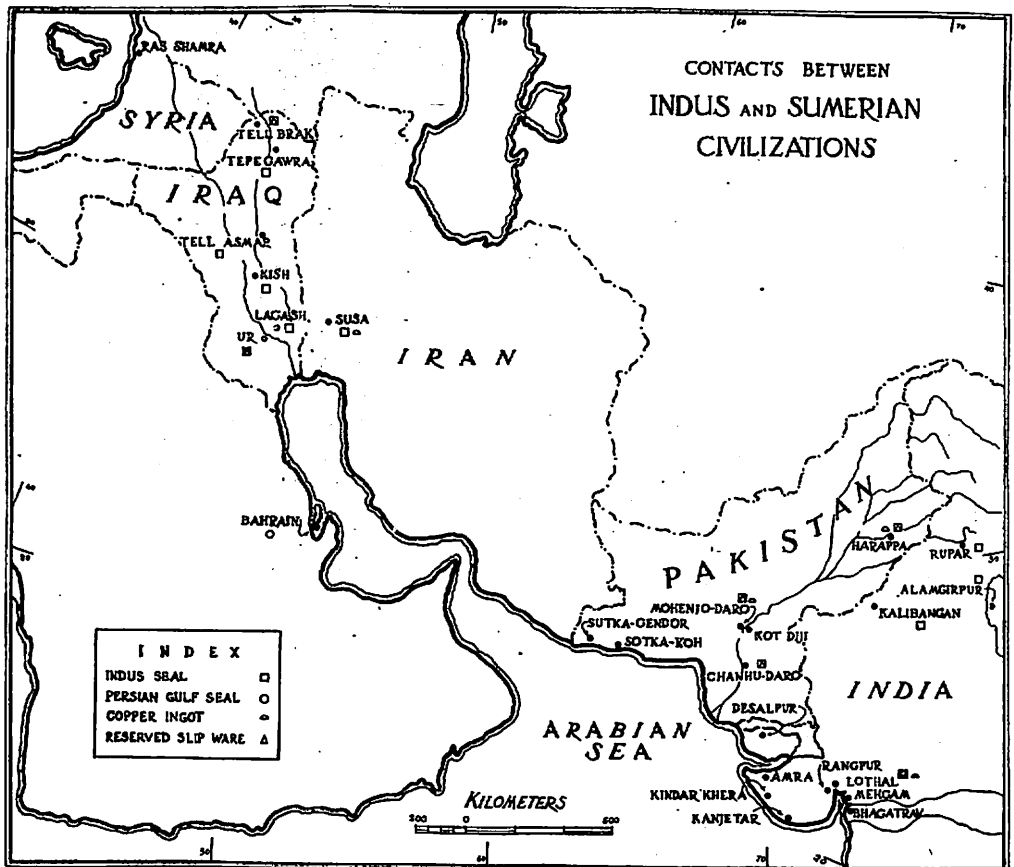


Fig. A

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Lothal further demonstrates how a highly resourceful community could exploit natural resources to its advantage and develop a small village into a well-planned town after overcoming the initial disadvantages presented by swamps and floods. The main attraction for the Harappans to move down the Kathiawar coast and settle at Lothal was the excellent harbour offering vast opportunities for developing coastal trade. In the fertile plains forming the hinterland grew cotton, wheat and rice. The settlers could control the source of supply of cotton, ivory and chank shell which were in great demand in the west. They could develop the already existing local industries such as bead-making, shell-fishing and ivory-working for export purposes and thus add to the prosperity of the non-agricultural classes. The scarcity of stone and metal needed for making essential tools and weapons could be met by importing them from the Indus Valley or the West Asian cities. In fact, Lothal became an important metal-working centre and emporium for international trade.

Initially, the Harappans could not effect any major change in the mode of living of the natives beyond introducing their own superior metal and lithic tools, painted pottery, personal ornaments and mechanisms of trade. After a century or more a sudden flood submerged the entire village, washed away the houses and damaged the peripheral mud wall. Determined to meet the threat of recurring floods by building houses on raised platforms, the inhabitants must have chosen a leader who could pool the resources in men and material, organize co-operative effort, plan new constructions and enforce regulations more strictly. The technical skill and experience gained over centuries in planning towns and building ante-diluvian structures in the Indus Valley were put to practical use. In addition, necessity made them build a dock for berthing ships and a warehouse for handling goods. The leader built an acropolis for himself and some modest structures for others, both well protected against inundation. Increased overseas trade and specialisation resulted in the growth of processing industries which depended on imported raw material.

The urban discipline of Harappa, Mohenjo-daro and Lothal presupposes overall control by an individual or an organised body of men. In the case of Lothal this authority appears to have been exercised by a secular rather than a religious body, for there is no evidence of the dominating influence of religion. Had it not been so, the ruler of the town should have got brick-enclosures built for fire-worship and animal sacrifice in the acropolis. Strangely enough, such religious structures are confined to the Lower Town in the heyday of prosperity.

The ruler, whoever he may be, was able to organize co-operative effort and take prompt measures for common benefit. The construction of massive platforms and peripheral walls as ante-diluvian measures would not have been possible but for him. It is under his direction that a dock and a warehouse were built and trade was regulated. Apparently, he collected taxes and distributed wages in kind. The emergence of a leader synchronising with the planning and expansion of the town in Phase II is significant. The absence of effective leadership in Phase IV resulted in the neglect of ante-diluvian measures and consequent destruction of the town by floods. Whether the disappearance of a political authority was due to the shifting of the political centre from Lothal or to the emergence of an influential priestly class challenging the secular authority it is difficult to say at present; the first signs of the break up of the social structure and the political set-up are seen in the occupation of the acropolis by bone-workers, bead-makers and other artisans in Phase IV. The result was the lack of civic amenities, neglect of public works and poor

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emerging from it (Fig. F 4, p. 26). In another case two hissing snakes are seen standing erect as if they are about to strike. On a large S-shaped vessel the story of 'the cunning fox and the crow' forms the subject of the painting (Fig. C, p. 25) in chocolate over buff. Some birds perching on a tree are seen holding fish in their beaks while others flutter in the sky. A few fish are seen dropped below, where an animal with a thick short tail is standing. It seems to represent a fox. Evidently the fox must be flattering the birds to snatch away fish. The high imagination of the artist is evident from the fact that he has shown only the legs or wings to indicate birds fluttering in the sky. In other panels the *pipal* and *acacia* and branches of other types of trees are painted. Alternately hatched squares, chequer pattern and circle with hatched interspaces are also drawn on the same vessel. Here both the styles are seen. Another elaborately painted jar with a concavoconvex profile found near a public place of fire-worship (Pl. XII, Fig. 36) is a typical example of the Imperial Harappan style. It is painted with intersecting circles, semi-circles and derivative leaf patterns. A row of sun motifs, the palm and *pipal* tree designs as well as successive rows of peacocks holding leaves in their beaks are drawn in black over red. It is a typical example of the Harappan style of painting. In evolving the provincial style the Lothal potters seem to have received inspiration from the west, especially from the Iranian and North Syrian sites and the Diyala region. Pairs of cranes and rows of fish-holding birds painted on the Lothal vessels are reminiscent of similar bird motifs from Susa D, while birds holding fish in their beaks occur in Ugarit III.¹ A stylised bird holding fish (Pl. XIII, Fig. 39 [1]) is reminiscent of the Diyala figures. Both are conspicuously absent in the Indus Valley. The wheat chaff and vegetable motifs noticed frequently on the Micaceous Red Ware (Pl. XIII, Fig. 40) can be compared with those from Susa D,² Arpachiya³ and Giyan IV.⁴ Rows of birds occur in Rangpur IIC and III also, but not in the Indus Valley.

A third element in the ceramic art of Lothal A and B is the occurrence of the Micaceous Red Ware painted in black with buntings, zigzag lines, hatched diamonds and wheat chaff. This ware appears to be pre-Harappan.

Vessels fired in the inverted firing technique and painted in groups of white wavy lines were in limited use throughout the occupation of Lothal. The close similarity between the Micaceous Red Ware and the black-and-red ware in shapes suggests a distinct cultural group living side by side with the Harappan from the earliest times. The occurrence of a grey ware and a chipped and polished stone chisel suggest other elements of an indigenous culture.

TERRACOTTAS

No stone sculpture has been found at Lothal but terracotta figurines are numerous. It is, however, strange to find that only nine human figures have been recovered so far. The female figurines are noted for beauty of form and proportion. Their broad shoulders, prominent breasts, narrow waist and well-proportioned limbs are noteworthy. In one case the navel is emphasised (Pl. XIII, Fig. 41) and in another, the breasts are prominent (Pl. XIII, Fig. 42). In two other female figurines the appliqué breasts have fallen off and

¹ C. F. A. Schaeffer, *Stratigraphie Comparée et Chronologie de l'Asie Occidentale*, Oxford, 1947, fig. 306.

² These motifs are noticed on the red ware from Susa in the reserve collection of the Louvre Museum, Paris.

³ M. E. L. Mallowan, 'Excavations at Tell Arpachiya' in *Iraq*, II, London 1935.

⁴ Schaeffer, *op. cit.*, fig. 245.

the limbs are partly broken. A figurine vaguely resembling the Mother Goddess figures from Kulli has a pedestal base and head-ornament produced by pinching clay all round (Pl. XIV, Fig. 43). It is different from the typical Mother Goddess figures of the Indus Valley in so far as the limbs are not shown and the appliqué decoration is wanting. There is absolutely no doubt that the cult of the Mother Goddess was not at all popular in Kathiawar. This is true of Rupar and Kalibāngan also.

Terracotta male figures are rare in the Indus Valley as well as in Kathiawar. In all four figures were found at Lothal, and one of them has a protruding belly and a prominent navel but the head and limbs are missing. Another very crudely modelled figurine has a bird-head and beaked nose. The best specimen is one with Sumerian features. It has a bald head, square-cut beard, pointed nose and slit eyes (Pl. XIV, Fig. 44). The eye-sockets are indicated by depressions. The pointed nose and long square-cut beard are features alien to Indus art. On the other hand, some terracotta figurines from Khafaje, Mari and Sumer have a square or rectangular beard with the hair indicated by incised vertical lines, but they do not have slit eyes. A model of an Egyptian mummy (Pl. XIV, Fig. 46) and another figure with short legs, a small head and prominent projections on the buttocks as in the case of a gorilla (Pl. XIV, Fig. 45) suggest contact with Egypt. The animal figures from Lothal reveal a close study by the artist. Among the domesticated animals the humped and humpless cattle including a cow (Pl. XV, Figs. 47 and 48), the dog, ram and pig were carefully modelled. The dewlap in the case of the cattle is marked by pinching clay and the hump and eyes by applied pellets. Although devoid of decorations such as the appliqué collar band and incised pellets, the Lothal figurines are highly realistic. The couchant ram with back-curved horns (Pl. XV, Fig. 50), the rhinoceros with beady eyes and prominent folds of the hide (Pl. XV, Fig. 51), the humpless cow with short horns and conspicuous udders and the Indian pariah dog are good examples of the art-in-the-round. The more significant figurines are, however, the two terracotta horses, one of which has a short stumpy tail, long neck and pricked ears (Pl. XV, Fig. 49).

TOYS, ORNAMENTS AND GAMESMEN

A large variety of toys were used by the children. Terracotta toy carts (Pl. XVI, Fig. 52), animal figures, balls used as marbles, spinning tops and discs must have served as objects of amusement. The toy carts with solid or perforated frame give a clue to the various types of bullock-carts used for land transport. A stone wheel from Lothal is carved with intricate designs as in chariot wheels and a few terracotta ones are painted with intersecting diagonal lines suggesting spokes. Wheeled animal figures (Pl. XVI, Fig. 55) and those with moveable heads were used in play for popular amusement.

Personal ornaments consisted of bangles of shell, copper and terracotta, ear and finger rings of copper and necklaces of beads known for their large variety of materials and shapes. Gold was used for making ear and nose rings and ear pendants (Pl. XVI, Fig. 53). Micro-beads of gold and steatite nose-rings with a screw, a gold bordered faience bead of the type found in Minoan II¹ and disc bead with double axial hole of the type found in the Royal cemetery at Ur² and segmented bead of faience deserve special mention. Bronze hairpins with or without a bird-head³ and bronze mirror (Pl. XVII, Fig. 56) and *kohl*

¹ Noticed in the National Museum of Archaeology, Athens.

² C. L. Woolley, *Ur Excavations*, II, *The Royal Cemetery*, pl. 134.

³ Bronze pins with bird-head occur in Susa D and Alisar.

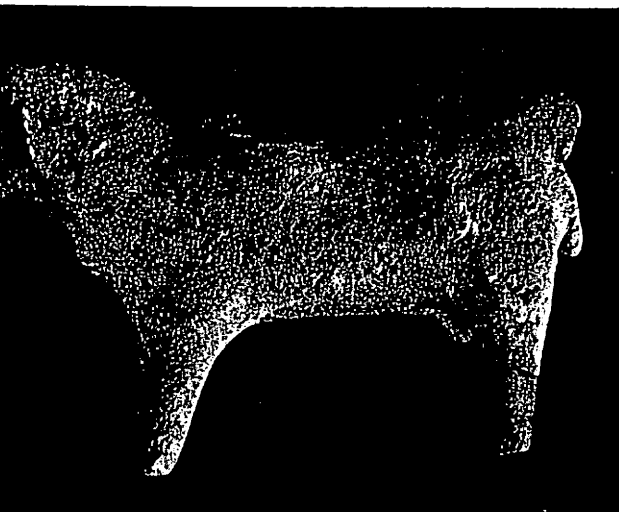


Fig. 47. Terracotta cow with prominent udders. Lothal. Scale 2/1.

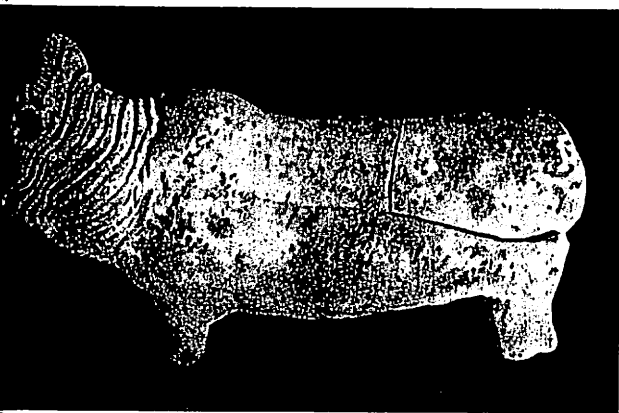


Fig. 48. Terracotta bull. Lothal. Scale 5/4.

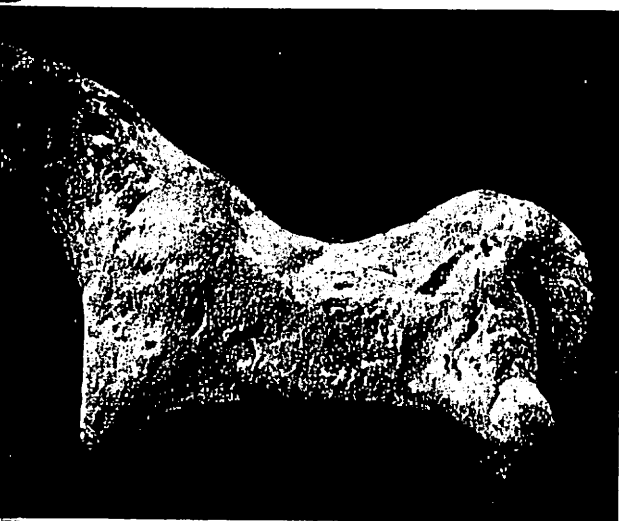


Fig. 49. Terracotta horse. Lothal. Scale 2/1.



Fig. 50. Terracotta couchant ram. Lothal. Scale 5/3.

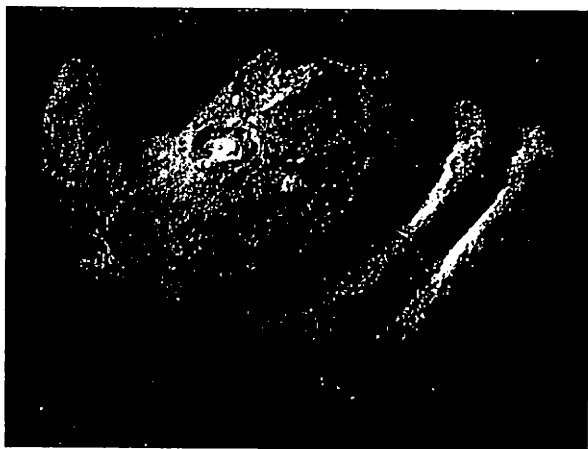


Fig. 51. Terracotta head of a rhinoceros. Lothal. Scale 9/7.