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Bronzes from the Indus Valley

In 1974 a clandestine digger in the ancient site at Daimabad in the Indus Valley discovered four bronzes of the Harappan culture.

S. R. Rao, Superintending Archaeologist of Aurangabad and excavator of the important site of Lothal (*ILN* February 25 and March 11, 1961), here describes the significance of these bronzes. In a later article he will report on his excavations at Daimabad.

Bronze figures of the Indus Valley civilization, also known as the Harappan culture where it lies inside India, have always been rare and, both consequently and intrinsically, of the greatest interest. Soon after hearing of the discovery of four bronzes in June, 1974, by a clandestine digger in the ancient site at Daimabad in Srirampur Taluk, Ahmadnagar District, Maharashtra State, I recovered these unique objects for the Archaeological Survey of India. I examined the place where they were found and after sinking an exploratory trench at the site confirmed on the basis of stratigraphic and ceramic evidence that the bronzes belonged to the Late Harappan (1800-1600 BC) phase. I had identified in 1973 a Late Harappan settlement at Ambhore, 20km from Daimabad, and my excavation of the site there brought to light furnaces used for refining copper. It also yielded evidence of the continued use of the Indus Script up to 1000 BC, confirming thereby the evidence from Theur, a post-Harappan site near Poona.

The Daimabad hoard consists of four objects: a chariot with a driver, drawn by two bullocks; a rhinoceros; an elephant; and a buffalo. Unlike the bronzes from the Indus Valley and Lothal, which are light and small in size (4 to 15cm in height), the Daimabad bronzes are very heavy (5 to 20 kilograms in weight and 20 to 35cm in height) and are cast solid. All of them had solid wheels so that they could be drawn with the help of a rope and were meant to be taken in procession. The elephant weighs nearly 20kg and the remaining three together weigh 20kg.

Chemical analysis reveals that the figures are made of low-tin bronze which has the qualities of toughness and elasticity. The pole of the chariot is soldered to its body; the yoke, which can be separated, has been soldered to the two bullocks which stand on a thick plate. The two wheels below the plate are missing. In the case of the buffalo

the wheels are soldered to the axle which was inserted in the rings provided below the plate over which the animal stands. The rhinoceros and buffalo have four wheels each, but those of the elephant are missing.

This hoard is unique not only because of the highly sophisticated technique of bronze-casting followed by the artists in the mid-second millennium BC, but also because of the evidence it has provided for the survival of Indus Valley art even after the destruction of the major settlements at Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, Lothal and Kalibangan.

Further, the hoard from Daimabad throws new light on the type of chariot in use in the second millennium BC. It is an open wagon with solid wheels, drawn by bullocks, unlike the closed wagon of Chanhu-daro (now in the Boston Museum). Stylistically the human figure driving the chariot belongs to the Harappan school as can be made out from his receding forehead, stumpy nose, small eyes, and hair-do, which are similar to those of the dancing girl from Mohenjo-daro. The muscular details of his leg can be compared with those of the human figure painted on the jar found by Mr M. N. Deshpanda in his excavation at Daimabad in 1958-59 and assigned to the Malwa Culture (1800-1600 BC). The presence of the rhinoceros among the Daimabad bronzes is highly significant, for this animal was specially favoured by the Harappa and Late Harappa folk of the Indus Valley and Gujarat. This animal is not known in any succeeding culture in India for more than 2,000 years. In muscular details the rhino from Daimabad can be compared with the terracotta figure from the Harappan levels of Lothal. The majestically standing male buffalo recalls the buffalo on Indus seals ●



Solid bronze elephant weighing 20kg.

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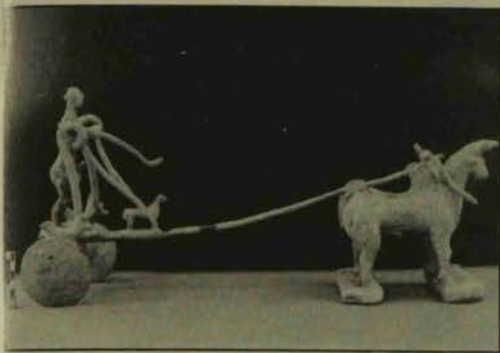
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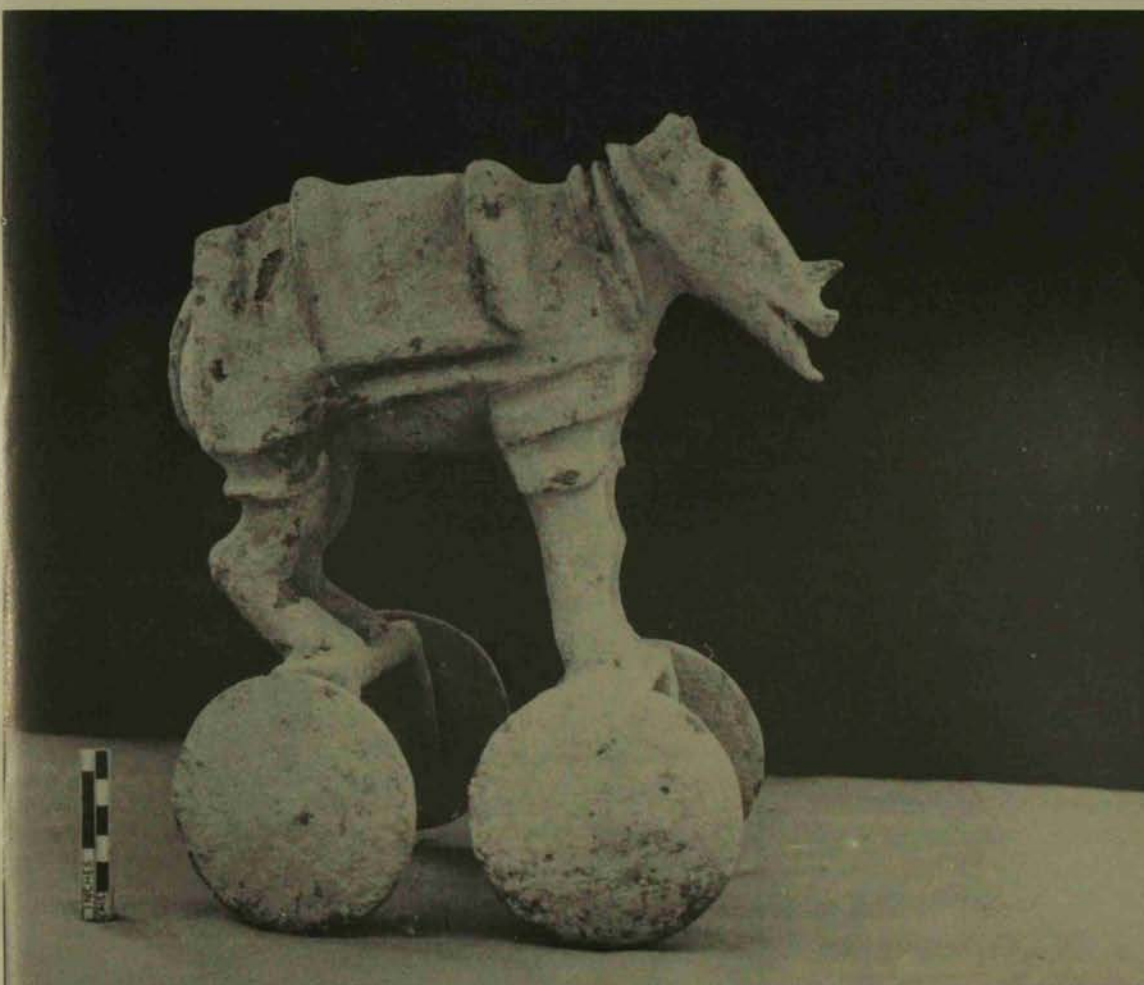
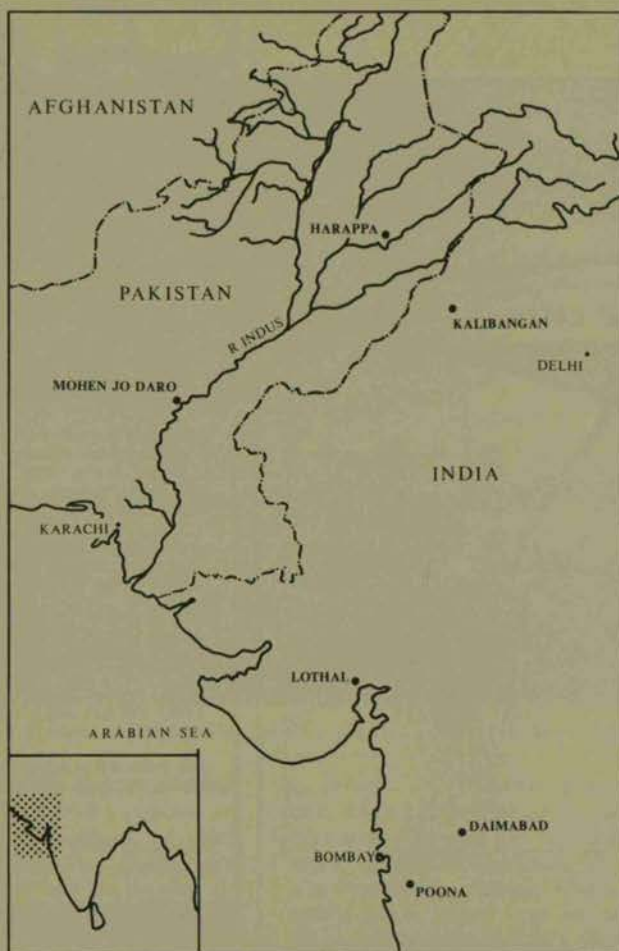
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Chariot with driver, dog and pair of bullocks.



Male buffalo on four wheels to enable pulling.



The rhinoceros was a significant find as it was not known in any succeeding Indian culture for 2,000 years.

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