

South Asian Archaeology. Helsinki, 5th - 9th July 1993.

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The twelfth international conference of the European Association of South Asian Archaeologists was held at the University of Helsinki, Finland, from the 5th to 9th of July 1993. About ninety papers were presented, and a total of about 110 attendees participated. Although originally conceived as a European association, the bi-annual conference has become quite world-wide in scope. In addition to the European delegates, participants at this conference came from the United States, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Japan, Russia, Canada and Australia. The extent of their involvement is indicated by the fact that five of the sessions were chaired by delegates from the non-European countries.

As often occurs with professional conferences such as these, there was a conspicuous absence of students. This was unfortunate, because it presents one of the few opportunities for them (both graduated and undergraduate) to meet, and discuss their research with most of the prominent South Asian specialists in one place. Presentation of academic papers is an important part of a student's development, and provision ought to be made for reduced fees to allow them to attend. The lack of attendance in large part was, however, also likely due to the cost of travel to Helsinki and the high cost of living in the city.

The Presidential Address was by Professor Asko Parpola of the University of Helsinki, who summarised his work, which is to be included in his forthcoming book *Deciphering the Indus Script*, due to be published by Cambridge University Press next year.

Following the plenary session, the conference was split into two sections with separate themes. Although unavoidable, this did produce some clashes for those who were interested in both areas, but by and large, the division was well arranged. There was a fairly large complement of art historian, and art dealers, at the conference and they could then concentrate on those sessions dealing with their topics. As *PIA* is primarily a forum for archaeologists, and because most of the sessions attended by the author were in that category, this review concentrates more on the Pre- and Protohistorical Archaeology section.

Topics covered in the Historical Archaeology and Art History section encompassed iconography, gods and rulers, coinage, bronzes, historical sites excavations, religion, ancient maps, Gandharan art, inscriptions, sculpture, temple art and jewellery. A particularly interesting presentation was given by Gil Juleff of Colombo, a PhD student at the Institute of Archaeology. It was entitled *Recent discoveries in the archaeo-metallurgy of Sri Lanka*, and described a unique smelting technology discovered while conducting an impact assessment project for the Samanalawewa Hydro-Electric Scheme. Thought to have reached its zenith in the seventh to tenth centuries in Sri Lanka, the technology utilised hilltop, horseshoe-shaped, natural draft furnaces which exploited the powerful westerly monsoon winds which blow during the months of June, July and August. Other papers in this section discussed new readings from Indus

seals, especially one by Iravatham Mahadevan who discussed the cult object, or ceremonial standard, which invariably appears before the 'unicorn' on Indus seals, and how it is seen as the forerunner of the Soma filter as described in the Rigveda and the prototype for the later *indra-dhvaja* symbol depicted on early historical coinage. Another PhD student from the Institute of Archaeology, Sharada Srinivasan, presented a paper entitled *New observations on high-tin bronze bowl making from Kerala, south India, and its archaeological implications*, which proved a fresh insight into the methods of fabrication of these bowls.

In the section on Pre- and Protohistorical Archaeology, topics included Pleistocene hominid evolution; reports on excavations in south central Asia, the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, India and Iran; lapis lazuli; a new grey-ware culture; talc bead technology; numerous pottery topics, both stylistic and technological; and a special session on the Harappa Project. In the stimulating paper entitled *Evolution of south Asian Pleistocene hominids: demic displacement or regional continuity?*, Kenneth A. R. Kennedy argued that the existence of an early *Sapiens* population ca 200,000 years ago in the Indian subcontinent, together with archaeological data from Palaeolithic and Mesolithic cultural traditions, can support a case for the establishment of a continuity in prehistoric South Asia populations. Such a case would seriously challenge the evolutionary 'Mitochondrial Eve' hypothesis. A paper by Serge Cleuziou and Maurizio Tosi on *Black boats of Magan* examined bitumen-sealed boats found in Oman during the Harappan period. These authors hypothesise that the source of the bitumen is Indus Valley deposits, but full results of a provenience analysis are not yet available.

A total of seven papers were presented in this section, reporting the latest findings from the continuing and excellent work being conducted by the French team and their associated in the Mehrgarh/Nausharo area of Baluchistan under the direction of Jean-François and Catherine Jarrige. Jean-François described the final phase of the Harappan occupation at Nausharo and its connection with the following cultural complex of Mehrgarh VIII. Catherine covered the Mature Harappan Phase at Nausharo (Period III). Anne Bouquillon presented a paper on the results of research into the production of steatite beads which first appeared at Mehrgarh at the end of the aceramic Neolithic period (ca end seventh millennium BC). This research has also allowed the estimation of baking temperatures and glazing methods used at Mehrgarh around 4000 BC. Sophie Méry discussed *A Harappan potter's workshop at Nausharo, Period III, Pakistan*. Ms. Méry's research has included the study of numerous lithic blades which were found at the workshop. Many of these had polish on one edge. She conducted some experimental use-wear analysis on similar material, and concluded that the archaeological blades may have been used to scrape and thin the pottery during manufacture; and that distal ends may have been used for incising. The Mehrgarh/Nausharo theme was continued by Gonzague Quivron's presentation of *The pottery sequence from 2700 to 2400 BC at Nausharo, Pakistan*.

Another topics very well covered in this section was the Harappan Project, to which one entire afternoon was devoted. The Harappan Project is one of the

largest in Pakistan at present, and has been on location now for some eight years continuously. Chaired by Dr. Gregory Possehl, from the University Museum, Philadelphia, presentations were given by the Harappa Project Director, Dr. Richard Meadow, by the Field Director Dr. J. Mark Kenoyer, and by other members of the team. Dr. Meadow described exploration of the extent of the major wall of the city which appears now to have been constructed about 2600 BC. Deep soundings have confirmed that the beginnings of urbanism at the site must be sought in the Early Harappan period (before 2600 BC). Dr. Kenoyer reported results of investigations into technological developments at the site, including ceramic technology, lithic technology, metallurgy and faience manufacture beginning in the Early Harappan period (ca 3300 BC) and continuing through to the Harappan Phase, 2600 to 1900 BC. He reported on his work with a local skilled potter in copying Early Harappan and Harappan designs; in order to experiment with and discover the technology of those potters. Papers were then given by William Belcher on riverine fisheries and habitat exploitation of the Indus Valley Tradition; by Paul Jenkins on the analysis of over on million ceramic sherds which have been excavated by the Harappa Project to date; and by Heather Miller on metal processing at the site.

It is unfortunate that not all of the vast amount of material covered in a conference of this size can be covered easily in a short review. The foregoing provides an overview of at least some of the major topics covered. The selection is in no way intended to reflect the relative importance or quality of those particular presentations compared with others. There were a plethora of excellent and well-presented papers. The majority of them will be available in one volume entitled *South Asian Archaeology 1993*, expected to be published in 1994.

Professor Ahmad Hassan Dani, of Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad, announced on behalf of the Director General of Archaeology and Museums of Pakistan that excavations are to be reopened at Mohenjo-Daro and invited foreign projects and researchers to participate; but participants would have to provide their own funding. The 1995 conference is to be held in Cambridge.