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Origins of Indian traditions

by Jk on FEBRUARY 3, 2013 in HISTORY: BEFORE 1 CE
Archaeologists have long known how to spot some ancient leftovers. The biggest breakthrough came in the 1960s, when excavators began to drop soil from their sites particularly from places where food likely was prepared onto mesh screens. The scientists then washed the earth away with water, leaving behind little bits of stone, animal bones, and tiny seeds of wheat, barley, millets, and beans. This flotation method allowed scientists to piece together a rough picture of an ancient diet. But spices are absent in macro-botanical record, says archaeologist Arunima Kashyap at Washington State University Vancouver, who, along with Steve Weber, made the recent proto-curry discovery.

Examining the human teeth and the residue from the cooking pots, Kashyap spotted the telltale signs of turmeric and ginger, two key ingredients, even today, of a typical curry. This marked the first time researchers had found unmistakable traces of the spices in the Indus civilization. Wanting to be sure, she and Weber took to their kitchens in Vancouver, Washington. We got traditional recipes, cooked dishes, then examined the residues to see how the structures broke down, Weber recalls. The results matched what they had unearthed in the field. Then we knew we had the oldest record of ginger and turmeric. Dated to between 2500 and 2200 B.C., the finds are the first time either spice has been identified in the Indus. They also found a carbonized clove of garlic, a plant that was used in this era by cooks from Egypt to China. [The Mystery of Curry]

As you read the article you find that our food habits (rice with curry, tandoori chicken), the ingredients used in our food (ginger, turmeric), culture of leaving food for animals and treating cows as sacred animals have not changed in the past four millennia.

You might be interested in the following as well:

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The area covered by Harappan civilization was bigger than ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia combined and there are various models which try to explain how the land was administered. One model suggests that it was not centrally governed, but had various domains centered around five major cities. While Mohenjo-daro and Harappa are the most well-known sites of the Indus-Saraswati civilization, Rakhigarhi in Haryana, which was probably one of those capital cities, is less known. Located on the dry river bed of Saraswati, apsidal structures and fire altars too have been discovered there.

In an interview with Sunday Guardian, Vasant Shinde, Professor of Archaeology at Deccan College talks about Rakhigarhi and the question of Aryan invasion/migration.

"Has Rakhigarhi been able to shed any light on the theory of the origin and history of Aryans?"

It is an intriguing question, one that can be understood only by identifying the actual cultural sequence of the Ghaggar/Saraswati. There are different hypotheses as regards the identity of the people who thrived on the banks of the Saraswati. Some people believe these were Aryans while others insist they were non-Aryans. My argument is that from 7000 BC onwards, we don’t have any evidence of people migrating. If we say the Aryans came from outside, it should reflect in their lifestyle. From 7000 BC onwards, we have been able to observe that they are the same people. Studying Rakhigarhi has been a study of their legacy. The model Haryana household today is exactly how the households of people must have been thousands and thousands of years ago. There are too many similarities between modern day and ancient Rakhigarhi to ignore.

Reference


You might be interested in the following as well:

1. Rakhigarhi: Harappan site in Haryana New Harappan sites are getting discovered all over North India and enhancing our understanding of our history. In 2004, a Harappan site was found in the small town of Bagasara...
2. Arabian Horses and the Aryans Recently Saudi Arabian officials claimed they have evidence that horses were domesticated in the Arabian peninsula around 9,000 years back. “This discovery will change our knowledge concerning the domestication of...
3. Harappans = Vedic People? Nandita Krishna in her article “In Search of a River”: http://www.newindpress.com/sunday/colItems.asp?ID=SEC20031219073814 writes about the River Saraswati and the research about it bq. The Ghaggar Valley is eight to twelve kilometres wide...

Guest Post: Michel Danino on the antiquity of Indus-Saraswati Civilization

[This post is in response to this news item on Archaeologists confirm Indian civilization is 2000 years older than previously believed. It is adapted from Michel’s response on IndiaArchaeology eGroup – JK]
would like to emphasize that the article sensationalizes things without understanding the issue. The Indus-Sarasvati civilization (accepting that the word “civilization” connotes urbanism) emerges around 2600 BC, and those dates have not been challenged.

It has long been established for at least 20 years that its antecedents at Mehrgarh (Baluchistan) go back to the 8th millennium BCE, in the context of a Neolithic rural society, that is with just stone tools, yet a fairly advanced agricultural economy. The new development (meaning some seven years) is the comparable antiquity of the earliest stages at Bhirrana (Haryana) excavated by the late L.S. Rao. This is also a rural stage, which probably straddles the Neolithic and the Chalcolithic; the pottery type is the Hakra ware, which has emerged at a few other sites of the Sarasvati basin in Haryana (such as Farmana) and Cholistan (in Pakistan).

How such antecedents, whether in Baluchistan or in the Sarasvati region and probably with contributions from other regions, converged towards the Early Harappan stage (usually dated from 3800 BCE) is the very interesting question which should have been addressed instead. As too often, the media hype conceals the real issues.

In any case the dates for the Indus cities “Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, Kalibangan or Dholavira” in their Mature urban stage will not change. They are firmly in the 3rd millennium BCE, as hundreds of carbon 14 and thermoluminescence have established.

You might be interested in the following as well:

1. **Guest Post: Michel Danino on Andrew Lawler’s article on Saraswati** (Carte de la sarasvati védique from Wikipedia)
   (Science, Vol 332 had an article titled In Indus Times, the River Didn’t Run Through It by Andrew Lawler. In the article, three...
2. **In Pragati: Book Review – The Lost River by Michel Danino**
   In 2003, the Union Minister for Tourism and Culture, Jagmohan sanctioned Rs. 8 crore to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to search for the river Sarasvati. Though it was an...
3. **Ghaggar-Hakra and Indus-Saraswati civilization**
   The Rig-Veda authors mention their land as that of seven rivers. Out of the seven only five exist now. The remaining two, Saraswati and Drishadwati have disappeared. Following the discovery...

**COMMENTS { 0 }**

**A Harappan Feast**

by Jk on OCTOBER 18, 2012 in HISTORY: BEFORE 1 CE

If you are having a proper Indian lunch or dinner, there is good chance that your food will contain ginger or turmeric or lentils. You have rice or millet and maybe even a banana to top it off. If so, the food that we eat today is no different from the ones eaten by our ancestors who lived in the Indus-Saraswati region, 4500 years back. An article in *Science* explains that due to new tools, researchers can now identify food, based on microscopic left overs. Ginger and turmeric were identified for the first time using these new tools and techniques at Farmana and it is the first time they have been spotted in the Harappan region. Thus, in Western lingo, Harappans ate “curry.”

The interesting find though is the banana, which was first cultivated in Papua New Guinea. It is not clear if banana was cultivated in the Harappan region or if it was obtained via trade with people in the East via the trading hubs of the ancient world. In fact there is a bit of controversy over the banana find and I had written about it here.
Indus script designed with care

by Jk on APRIL 23, 2012 in HISTORY: BEFORE 1 CE

In his book, *The Lost River*, Michel Danino wrote the following about the Harappan civilization.

> Altogether, the area covered by this civilization was about 800,000 km²: roughly one-fourth of today’s India, or if we can make comparisons with contemporary civilizations, ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia put together. This vast expanse must have offered unique opportunities as well as posed peculiar challenges — opportunities in terms of a wider choice of sources for raw materials and a richer store of human skill and experience; challenges arising from a greater diversity of regional cultures which had to be integrated, or at least coordinated, and the sheer extent of communication networks required to keep it all together.

It turns out that the Harappans indeed took the challenge seriously and made sure that the script was uniform across this vast region.

> Writing is an important window to the intellectual creativity of a civilisation. Our analysis reveals that people who designed the Indus script were intellectually creative and considerable time and effort went into designing it. The manner in which the signs were modified shows that it was acceptable across all the sites of the civilisation and was not intended for a small group of people, said Nisha Yadav from TIFR, the principal author of the study.

The Indus script is found on objects such as seals, copper tablets, ivory sticks, bronze implements and pottery from almost all sites of the civilisation. The Indus civilisation was spread over an area of about a million square kilometres and yet, the sign list over the entire civilisation seems to be the same indicating that the signs, their meaning and their usage were agreed upon by people with large physical separation. A lot of thought, planning and utility issues must have been taken into consideration while designing these signs, says the TIFR paper, published in the Korean journal, Scripta.

The paper also indicates that the script may have a connection with scripts from India or even China. The authors say that the signs of the Indus script seem to incorporate techniques in their design that were used in several ancient writing systems to make optimum use of a limited number of signs.

You might be interested in the following as well:

1. **A Talk on Indus People and their Script** In April 2009, “a team of Indian scientists reports in Friday’s issue of Science journal that the Indus script has a structured sign system showing features of a formal language.”...
2. **Indus Script: A Formal Language** This picture shows a Harappan seal with five inscriptions or characters, which have been undeciphered. In fact there are many decipherments, but no scholarly consensus. One of the disputes is...
3. **The Markov Model of Indus Script** (From a Tantra t-shirt) There is a school of thought which believes that the Harappan seals convey something linguistic; after all they had extensive trade contacts with literate Mesopotamia. Thus...
India boasts of strong culture and traditions. This article introduces you to different aspects of Indian cultural tradition. However, there are some very prominent features that bind all Indians to the brand 'Hindustani'. These traditions range from the aarti done to welcome the guests to touching the feet of the elders. The cultural traditions of India have been passed on from generation to generation and have become deeply rooted in the Indian way of living. In this section, we have covered the important culture and traditions of India. 12 unique traditions and customs of India that will make you want to get out of your comfort zone and immerse in cultures. Join us for a giant cocktail of rituals and customs dating back to the earliest centuries of Indian civilization. The Aghori sadhus of Varanasi. The Aghori sadhus are wonderous monks who renounce all earthly possessions in order to attain eternal spiritual liberation. Indian-origin religions Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism, are all based on the concepts of dharma and karma. Ahimsa, the philosophy of nonviolence, is an important aspect of native Indian faiths whose most well known proponent was Mahatma Gandhi, who used civil disobedience to bring India together against the British Raj. This philosophy further inspired Martin Luther King Jr. during the American civil rights movement. Indian philosophy comprises the philosophical traditions of the Indian subcontinent. Table of Contents show.

1 Indian Wedding Traditions
   1.1 Origin of Arranged Marriages:
   1.2 Birth Charts:
   1.3 Polygamy and Love Marriages in Hinduism:
   1.4 Kanyadaan:
   1.5 Mangalsutra:
   1.6 Saat Pheras or The Seven Vows:
   1.7 Solah Shringar:
   1.8 Baraat:
   1.8.1 image source.

Indian Wedding Traditions. Via – aphrodies.com. Have you guys and girls ever wondered: Why do Indian men and women have to go through the torment of fasting throughout their own wedding day, while others enjoy a lavish feast? They are supposed to be the center of the Universe for that particular day? Why do they have to dress Indian culture and traditions are something which has now become renowned all across the world. We all refer to customs and traditions of India as something very diverse and unique. But seldom do we give a thought to why things are done in certain specific ways. Indian culture is full of several unique customs and traditions, which outsiders might find intriguing. Most of these originate from the Ancient Indian scriptures and texts, which have dictated the way of life in India for thousands of years. Here are 16 fascinating Indian Culture, Traditions and customs. Greetings. Religious Customs.