

Bibliography

1) Out of Africa and the first Palaeolithic settlement of South Asia

Around two million years ago the first human beings started to move out of Africa. Following three probable routes they spread towards the Levant, in the north, and the Arabian Peninsula, in the east; from here, crossing the strait, they moved to the Indian. While almost nothing was known of this early period of prehistory in the study region until some 30 years ago, at present we have much information about its earliest peopling. They mainly derive from the researches and excavations carried out in Israel, Georgia, Yemen and the Sultanate of Oman. In this respect, of particular importance is the site of Dmanisi, in Georgia, close to the border with Armenia, which has been dated to some 1,800,000 years ago, from which many human remains with different characteristics have been brought to light. Currently we know that *Homo Erectus* was responsible for this early spread, and that other species followed in later periods.

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2) The shell-midden sites of the Indian Ocean

The traces of the first prehistoric settlements of the coasts of the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean are characterised by the presence of shell-midden sites, which are richly documented at least since the beginning of the seventh millennium BP. At present these sites have been recorded almost all over the coasts of the Arabian Peninsula, as well as those of Makran, in present-day Pakistan. This is the area that was inhabited by the fish-eaters of classical antiquity that the ancient Greek writers, Arrian for instance, described so accurately in their reports. Some of these shell-middens, which are characterised by heaps of food refuse, mainly marine and mangrove shells and fish bones, have been excavated in Oman and in the Arabian Emirates. They revealed the presence of both man-made structures, among which are fireplaces, pits and postholes, and cemeteries which have been systematically radiocarbon-dated during the last 30 years.

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3) Mehrgarh and the first Neolithic of the Indian Subcontinent

The site of Mehrgarh, along the course of the Bolan River in Balochistan (Pakistan), is the only in the region from which we have indications of a probable local domestication of plants and animals during the VIII-VII millennium BP. Mehrgarh is located along the major route presently followed by nomadic people that seasonally move from the mountains of Afghanistan down to the Indus Valley. The site consists of many habitation layers, the oldest of which do not show any trace of ceramic vessels. From each occupation layer structural remains, consisting of peculiar, multiple rectangular features have been discovered. The same site also yielded a few cemeteries, mainly of crouched individuals,

who, according to the different periods, were buried into oval pits or close to straight mud-brick walls. The grave goods from the cemeteries help understand the high technological level reached by the Neolithic inhabitants of Mehrgarh, and the trade routes they followed to achieve different materials in order to produce ornaments among which are necklaces and bracelets.

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4) The Bronze Age in the Indus Valley

During the entire III millennium BC, the Indus Valley and its neighbouring territories saw the flourishing of an incredible phenomenon of Bronze Age urbanisation. Since the 1930's nothing was known of the prehistoric archaeology of this region, and the discovery of a new urban civilisation, which was then compared with those of Egypt and Mesopotamia, had an incredible impact on the archaeology of those times. Although we still know little about this Bronze Age world, the excavations carried out in Pakistan (Mohenjo-daro and Harappa), India (Lothal and Dholavira) and Afghanistan (Mundigak), revealed the existence of a very advanced society, the edification large metropolises, impressive remains of very well structured and conceived cities, complex exploitation of the water resources, and almost no traces of armaments, religious beliefs and cemeteries. The Bronze Age Harappans had already invented a sort of script, of still undeciphered pictograms mainly represented on steatite stamp seals.

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5) Bronze Age trade across the Indian Ocean

Trade and commerce across the Indian ocean started to be active during the III millennium BC. Clear indications of movements across the Ocean, from the Indian Subcontinent to the Arabian Peninsula and vice-versa, are indicated by the discoveries of Indus Civilization harbours at Ra's al-Junayz in the Sultanate of Oman. Here rectangular structures made of bricks, containing Indus seals, pottery, bronze hooks and other items, among which are pieces of bitumen, were brought to light during the excavations carried out during the last twenty years. The reason why the Harappans moved, by boat, across the Ocean are to be sought in their need for copper and other goods, which are present in Arabia. Potsherds of grey ware, and ceramic vessels with typical floral, painted decorations, yielded by the researches conducted at Ra's al-Junayz, were scientifically analysed. They showed that they had been manufactured in India, given their strong similarities with similar vessels found at the Indus Civilisation city of Lothal in Gujarat.

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