

A new study on the food system of Indus Valley civilization

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In news

A new study finds that Indus Valley Civilization diet had the dominance of meat

Key findings of the study

- A new study, titled “**Lipid residues in pottery from the Indus Civilisation in northwest India**” looks at the food habit of the people of that era on the basis of lipid residue analysis found in pottery from Harappan sites in Haryana.
- It finds that the diet of the people of Harappan civilization had a dominance of meat, including extensive eating of beef
- The study also finds dominance of animal products such as **meat of pigs, cattle, buffalo, sheep and goat, as well as dairy products, used in ancient ceramic** vessels from rural and urban settlements of Indus Valley civilization in northwest India
- The study says that out of domestic animals, cattle/buffalo are the most abundant, averaging between 50% and 60% of the animal bones found, with sheep/goat accounting for 10% of animal remains.
- It says that the high proportions of cattle bones may suggest a cultural preference for beef consumption across Indus populations, supplemented by consumption of mutton/lamb
- As per the study at Harappa, 90% of the cattle were kept alive until they were three or three-and-a-half years,

- suggesting that females were used for dairying production, whereas male animals were used for traction.
- The study states that wild animal species like deer, antelope, gazelle, hares, birds, and riverine/marine resources are also found in small proportions in the faunal assemblages of both rural and urban Indus sites suggesting that these diverse resources had a place in the Indus diet
 - According to the study, the food pattern is similar at the sites in northwest India, where domestic and wild mammals and smaller proportions of birds, reptiles, riverine fish, and molluscs were consumed
 - As per the study, there is also evidence of hares and birds being eaten, although little evidence of chicken being a part of the diet
 - It also finds that ledge-shouldered jars and large storage jars at Harappa have been linked to storage of liquids such as wine and oil

How the study was conducted?

- The scope of this study concentrates on **five villages – Alamgirpur (Meerut, UP), two in Masudpur (Hisar, Haryana), Lohari Ragho (Hisar), Khanak (Bhiwani, Haryana)** as well as Farmana town (in Rohtak district) and Rakhigarhi city (Hisar).
- Analysis was conducted on 172 pottery fragments recovered from the sites.
- **Ceramic lipid residue analysis was used in the study that** provides a powerful means by which foodways of populations can be examined and has been used in a range of archaeological contexts around the world to extract and identify foodstuff within ancient vessels