

Dairy production in the Indus Valley Civilisation

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In news

A new study has shown that dairy products were being produced by the Harappans as far back as 2500 BCE.

Key findings of the study

- With the analysis on ancient pots, researchers show the earliest direct evidence of dairy product processing, thus throwing fresh light on the rural economy of the civilisation.
- The studies were carried out on 59 shards of pottery from Kotada Bhadli, a small archeological site in present-day Gujarat

How did the researchers find it?

- The researchers used molecular analysis techniques to study the residues from ancient pottery.
- One of the researchers states that Pots are porous. So as soon as we put any liquid form of food, it will absorb it. The pot preserves the molecules of food such as fats and proteins. Using techniques like C16 and C18 analysis we can identify the source of lipids
- Traces were seen in cooking vessels indicating that milk may have been boiled and consumed
- Researchers also have found residues in a bowl showing that either heated milk or curd could have been served.
- There are also remains of a perforated vessel, and similar vessels were used in Europe to make cheese.

Animal Husbandry

- The team was also able to show which type of animals

were being used for dairy production.

- They studied the tooth enamel from fossils of cattle, water buffalo, goat and sheep found in the area.
- Cows and water buffalo were found to consume millets, while sheep and goats ate nearby grass and leaves.
- A preliminary study suggested that most of the cattle and water-buffalo died at an older age, suggesting they could have been raised for milk, whereas the majority of goat/sheep died when they were young, indicating they could have been used for meat.