

Interpersonal Violence and Social Identity Suppression in Ancient Indian Skeletal Remains (2600 BCE – 1300 BCE): A Pan-Harappan Perspective

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Abstract

This paper presents a synthetic, scholarly analysis of interpersonal violence and evidence for social-identity suppression (here defined as differential access to resources, healthcare, safety and socially marginalizing burial/ritual practices) in Harappan (Indus Civilization) skeletal series dated ~2600–1300 BCE. I integrate and critically analyse ~20 published reports, excavation/site osteological reports and methodological studies, including at least five primary osteological datasets (Harappa – Area G/Cemetery R-37/Cemetery H; Harappa additional trauma reports; Rakhigarhi cemetery; Farmana; Kalibangan and related site reports). Through a comparative meta-analysis of trauma prevalence, lesion patterning, age/sex distributions, and mortuary context, I argue that interpersonal violence at select Harappan communities was non-random and patterned by community membership, sex and mortuary treatment – consistent with socially structured violence and forms of social-identity suppression during the urban → post-urban transition. I emphasise methodological limits (preservation, sampling, recovery bias) and propose directions for future primary research (targeted excavation of periphery contexts, standardized trauma recording, ancient DNA/isotope integration).

Keywords

Harappan, Indus Civilization, trauma, cranial injury, social identity, structural violence, bioarchaeology, Harappa, Rakhigarhi, Farmana, Kalibangan.