

(Q) Evaluate the significance of seals and sealings in the reconstruction of socio-economic and religious life of the Harappan people.

Seals and sealings constitute one of the most abundant artefactual evidences of the Harappan civilization, and have been used by historians to reconstruct its socio-economic and ~~religious~~ organisations and religious ideas.

Socio-Economic Organisation/Life

While speaking for the society, seals and sealings are mostly silent except for indicating that these were social identity markers for different clans or classes. The ~~are~~ standardisation and wide circulation of these seals & sealings also suggest the presence of an issuing authority.

But, these are ~~are~~ some interpretations only and ~~the~~ our understanding of their actual usage is blinded/blurred by the lack of deciphered texts.

As far as the economic life is concerned, these seals and sealings offer most important insights. They have been used to construct trade networks both within and outside Harappan zone. It has also been suggested that

these were used by individual merchants or organisation as a mark of ownership.

But at the same time it is quite difficult to distinguish between administrative and economic utility of these seals and sealings.

Religious life/beliefs/ideas

The iconography on the seals offer ~~rare~~ useful information about Harappan belief system. Frequent depiction of animal motifs, such as, Unicorn, Elephant, Bull etc has been interpreted as symbolic or totemic. The Pashupati seal, identified by John Marshall as Proto-shiva, ~~may~~ suggests possible Symbolism.

However, these interpretations are speculative in nature. Animal motifs may have been clan-markers as well. Similarly, the so-called 'Pashupati-icon' is highly contested and is far from certain that it represented early form of shiva. It is also not clear that this icon was religious symbol or the administrative one.

Seals and sealings have been used as source of ~~history~~ socio-economic and religious history of the Harappan people. But, unless the script is deciphered, their interpretations should be viewed as suggestive rather than definitive.