

Walking with the Unicorn

Social Organization and Material Culture
in Ancient South Asia

Jonathan Mark Kenoyer
Felicitation Volume

Edited by

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Front cover: SEM microphotograph of Indus unicorn seal H95-2491 from Harappa (photograph by J. Mark Kenoyer © Harappa Archaeological Research Project).

Back cover, background: Pot from the Cemetery H Culture levels of Harappa with a hoard of beads and decorative objects (photograph by Toshihiko Kakima © Prof. Hideo Kondo and NHK promotions).

Back cover, box: Jonathan Mark Kenoyer excavating a unicorn seal found at Harappa (© Harappa Archaeological Research Project).



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Jonathan Mark Kenoyer and ISMEO – Occasions in Continuum

Adriano V. Rossi

President, ISMEO

Associazione Internazionale di Studi sul Mediterraneo e l'Oriente

The intervention of the Italian archaeologists of ISMEO – Tucci's ISMEO – in the archaeology of the Indus Civilization under the direction of the late Maurizio Tosi took place in the early 1980s at Mohenjo-daro, Sindh (Pakistan), within the framework of an intensive and fruitful collaboration with Michael Jansen, Günther Urban and a wide group of German colleagues from the prestigious Rheinisch-Westfaelische Technische Hochschule of Aachen, mainly specialists in topographic recording and architectural analysis.

After a century from its discovery, Mohenjo-daro is still considered, rightly or wrongly, the city-symbol of this enigmatic civilization, and the joint Italian-German project, which followed a holistic but strictly non-destructive approach, represents a crucial moment for its historical understanding and socio-cultural fostering, as well as for the structural conservation of the exposed areas (Jansen and Urban 1984, 1987; Leonardi, Balista and Vidale 1988).

It is in this pivotal archaeological reality, and in a moment of deep revision and fast evolution of archaeological methodologies, that the Italian archaeologists and geo-archaeologists working with ISMEO met Jonathan Mark Kenoyer and began a long season of common fieldwork and scientific exchange (Figure 1). At Mohenjo-daro, the effort was not only to understand the erosion and transformation in time of the buried ruins, but also to record the distribution of the craft workshops and their dumps in the core of the ancient city; here, Kenoyer's contribution on the marine shell industries was crucial (Kenoyer 1984, 1985).



Figure 1. Massimo Vidale, Alexandra Ardeleanu-Jansen and Jonathan Mark Kenoyer at Mohenjo-daro during the ISMEO–Aachen University Mission in 1983 (courtesy J. M. Kenoyer and ISMEO–Aachen University Mission).



Figure 2. William Belcher, Massimo Vidale and Jonathan Mark Kenoyer at Harappa in 1995 (courtesy W. Belcher and Harappa Archaeological Research Project).

After Mohenjo-daro, the collaboration of Italian scholars linked to ISMEO/ISIAO, in particular Massimo Vidale, with Mark Kenoyer and his colleagues from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and various South Asian institutions continued in the ethnoarchaeological study of the agate beads factory of Khambhat in Gujarat (India), and in the excavation projects at Harappa in Punjab (Pakistan) (for examples, see Kenoyer and Vidale 1992; Kenoyer, Vidale and Bhan 1991, 1994; Vidale, Kenoyer and Bhan 1993) (Figure 2). This fruitful research partnership led to the understanding of several enigmatic aspects of the Indus material culture and technologies, and produced a large number of seminal publications, including papers and monographs often published by ISMEO/ISIAO (for examples, see Kenoyer and Meadow 2000; Meadow and Kenoyer 2000; Miller and Vidale 2000; Vidale 2000).



Figure 3. Dennys Frenez and Jonathan Mark Kenoyer in the Sultanate of Oman taking silicon impressions of an Indus seal found at Salut (courtesy D. Frenez and Italian Mission to Oman).

More recently, when ISMEO had already been refounded, this collaboration landed on the opposite shores of the Arabian Sea in the Sultanate of Oman, where Mark Kenoyer is now working with Dennys Frenez to decode the complex nature of the earliest Indo-Arabian connections in the Early Bronze Age, revealing an unexpected, deep penetration of Indus traders in the Omani hinterland (Frenez *et al.* 2016; Méry *et al.* 2017) (Figure 3).

The re-established ISMEO – *Associazione Internazionale di Studi sul Mediterraneo e l'Oriente*, founded in Rome in November 2012 and now very close to become a Foundation under the Italian Law and with the support of the Ministries of Education and Cultural Heritage, aims at being considered the direct heir – also through its denomination – of the *Istituto per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente* (ISMEO), founded in 1933 by Giovanni Gentile and Giuseppe Tucci.

This sense of continuity is further strengthened by the presence within the refounded ISMEO of many members who were also part of the now dissolved Institute, whose studies and research focus on that greater 'Indian' world, which – since its prehistoric roots to the present – has always been at the centre of Tucci's ISMEO, in all its religious, geographical, political and cultural forms.

This is the main reason why the amount and quality of the scientific information that over the past thirty years sprang from Kenoyer's collaboration with ISMEO's researchers can be said impressive. It is indeed a great pleasure for all ISMEO associates to have contributed to the publication of this relevant Felicitation Volume, sign of a long-lasting friendship but also a promise for future initiatives and new joint research to come in a region of the world central to both ancient and modern history not less than Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East.

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