DIS-Asia-Indus-Harappa-Bajaur Valley-Priestess 2

## Female figurine, Bajaur River Valley, Indus River Valley Tributary, Harappan Civilization, 2800-2600 BCE.

## 

## This hollow bell-shaped terracotta figurine is probably from Bajaur valley (area of 600 sq. miles), a hilly area located northwest of Malakand at the border between Pakistan and India, in the sphere of influence of the early Harappan Civilization during the so called Regionalization Era, 2800-2600 BCE (Kenoyer 1998: 39-45).

This figurine’s head is oriented horizontally with an open mouth as if speaking to an audience. Closed, lentoid eyes suggest that a a prayer us being uttered -- a cinematographic moment caught in time to which we are invited. The figurine’s extended arms suggest she is in th act of embracing another. A pinched, beak-like nose is suggestively avian, recalling many Neolithic female cultic figures with bird-like features possibly indicative of their worship of an avian heavenly deity. In this context the curve of the votive cultic offrand suggests that the deity involved was associated with the local carrion birds, which in the case of Harappa would have been the gyphon vulture. The bell-shaped hollow body is indicative of the flowing skirts of Bajaur Valley female cultic figurines.. Lack of prominent breasts suggest that this figurine is an older female priestess of the goddess Asherah or her cognate in the Harappa civilization engaged in assisting cultic worshippers in successful childbearing who are themselves nubile. The hairdressing with a frontal semi-circular gathering also suggests a stylized priestly accoutrement. The right lower arm is missing. Est 6,500 USD (2016; Barakat Gallery, 405 North Rodeo Drive, Beverly Hills, California-90210); Pd 400 USD, Provenance: ex UK art market, acquired prior to 1985, Australian Collection, 2016). Extremely rare.

# REFERENCES

**Kenoyer, Jonathan Mark. 1998. *Ancient cities of the Indus Valley Civilization.* Karachi, Pakistan: American Institute of Pakistan Studies, Oxford University Press.**