Research into the Use and durability of Harappan Stamp Seals

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Researchers into the Harappan Civilization fall into two camps when considering the purpose and use of the Harappan stamp seal. The majority see the seals as cognate to Near Eastern seals in terms of use and purpose. The other questions whether the small square generally stone artifacts are seals at all and if they are how were they utilized. They call attention to the fact that the seals are almost exclusively manufactured from steatite, an extremely soft stone. They do not see how seals of steatite would survive in the observed nearly unworn condition if utilized in the amount proposed by the majority. In summer 2004, an experiment was carried-out to determine the durability of Harappan Stamp seals. A seal of average proportion was manufactured and stamped into clay balls to replicate proposed use, the seal was recorded throughout. This paper presents the results of this research.