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The Harappan Culture: Bronze Age Civilization

THE INDUS or the Harappan culture is older than the chalcolithic cultures which have been treated earlier, but it is far more developed than these cultures.

It arose in the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent. It is called Harappan because this civilization was discovered first in 1921 at the modern site of Harappa situated in the province of West Punjab in Pakistan. It extended from Jammu in the north to the Narmada estuary in the south, and from the Makran coast of Baluchistan in the west to Meerut in the north-east. The area formed a triangle and accounted for about 1,299,600 square kilometers.

Nearly 1500 Harappan sites are known so far in the subcontinent. Of these, the two most important cities were Harappa in Punjab and Mohenjodaro (literally the mound of the dead) in Sindh, both forming parts of Pakistan. Situated at a distance of 483 kilometres they were linked together by the Indus. A third city lay at Chanhu Daro about 130 km south of Mohenjodaro in Sindh, and a fourth at Lothal in Gujarat at the head of the Gulf of Cambay. A fifth city lay at Kalibangan, which means black bangles, in northern Rajasthan. A sixth called Banawali is situated in Hissar district in Haryana.

It saw two cultural phases, pre-Harappan and Harappan, similar to that of Kalibangan. The Harappan culture is noticeable in its mature and flourishing stage at all these six places. It is also found in its mature phase in the coastal cities of Sutkagendor and Surkotada, each one of which is marked by a citadel. The later Harappan phase is found in Rangpur and Rojdi in the Kathiawar peninsula in Gujarat. These phases also appear in

Rakhigarhi which is situated on the Ghaggar in Haryana and is much bigger than Dholavira.

Archaeological Discoveries

- Harappa was the first site to be discovered by Alexander Cunningham in as early as 1875. He was the first Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), often called the father of Indian Archaeology. Harappan site was badly destroyed by brick robbers.
- The Harappan civilisation was discovered in 1920-21 following the excavations by R.D. Banerjee at Mohenjodaro and by D.R. Sahnii at Harappa.
- Primarily this civilization was named after Harappa, the first site where this unique culture was discovered. But later termed as the 'Indus Valley Civilisation' due to the discovery of more and more sites in the Indus Valley. Alternatively it has also come to be called the 'Harappan civilisation' after the name of its first discovered site, because more and more sites were discovered far away from the actual river valley.
- On the basis of the findings of Harappan seals in Ur and Kish in Mesopotamia, Marshall suggested that Harappan civilisation flourished between 3250 and 2750 B.C. Wheeler dated it to 2500-1500 B.C. But according to C-14 system mature Harappan Civilisation was prevalent during 2350-1750 B.C.
- The cities were far more advanced than their counterparts in prehistoric Egypt, Mesopotamia or anywhere else in Western Asia.
- There were earlier and later cultures, often called

Early Harappan and Late Harappan, in the same area. The Harappan civilisation is sometimes called the Mature Harappan culture to distinguish it from these cultures. On the basis of radiocarbon dating of this civilisation following chronology emerges:

Early Harappan Phase : 3500 - 2600 B.C.

Mature Harappan Phase : 2600-1900 B.C.

Late Harappan Phase : 1900- 1300 B.C.

- v Those cultures which precede Harappan culture are pre-Harappan cultures, while proto-Harappan cultures are those pro- Harappan cultures which

have some close similarities with the Harappan culture or which may be said to have anticipated certain essential elements of Harappan culture.

- v There is every chance that it was in Ghaggar-Hakra system in Cholistan that transition from early Harappan 'culture' to mature Harappan 'civilization' was achieved.
- v Early Harappan settlements were located in Kirthar piedmont and Kohistan; it is only during mature Harappan 'civilized' phase that we find settlements, one of which was Mohenjodaro, in floodplain.

Sites	River	Location	Discovered by	Year
Harappa	Ravi		Dayaram Sahani	1921
Mohenjodaro	Indus		R.D. Bannerjee	1922
Lothal	Bhogwa		S.R. Rao	1957
Kalibangan	Ghaggar		A. Ghosh	1955
Chanhudaro	Indus		N.G. Majumdar	1935
Suktagedor	Arabian Sea		Aurel Stein	
Banawali	Saraswati		R.S. Bisht	1973
Kot Diji	Indus		Ghurye	1935
Ropar	Sutlej		Y.D. Sharma	1953
Alamgirpur	Hindan		Punjab University	1958
Balakot	Coastal		George F. Dales	1979
Allahdino	Indus (coast)-		W.A. Fairservis	1956
Desalpur			Bhadar P.P. Pandya and M.A. Dhakey	
Surkotada		Rann of Kutch	Jagpati Joshi	1964
Dholavira		Rann of Kutch excavated by	Jagpati Joshi R.S. Bisht	1967-68 1991
		Rangpur	Madhav Swarup Vats	1953
Ganverivala		Pakistan	Rafeeq Mugal	
RakhiGarhi		Jeend (Haryana)	Rafeeq Mugal	

Area

- Harappan Civilisation covers an area of 12,50,000 sq. km. Most of these sites are located on river banks.
- Distribution pattern of these settlements in terms of rivers are, that (i) only 40 settlements are located on the Indus and its tributaries and (ii) as many as 1,100 (80%) settlements are located on the vast plain between the Indus and the Ganga, comprising mainly the Saraswati river system which is dry today, and (iii) about 250 settlements are found in India beyond the Saraswati river system a number of them in Gujarat, and a few in Maharashtra.
- Its known extent in the west is upto Sutkagedor in Baluchistan. Alamgirpur in (Meerut in Uttar Pradesh) in the east; Daimabad (Ahmadnagar in Maharashtra) in south: and Manda (Akhnoor in Jammu and Kashmir) in the north.
- It covers an area of almost 1600 km. east-west and 1400 km. north-south.

Town Planning

- Harappan Civilisation's Town Planning was very well planned. If you look at the plan of the Lower Town you will notice that roads and streets were laid out along an approximate "grid" pattern intersecting at right angles.
- The towns were well planned and the streets cut each other at the right angles. Even the width of these streets was in set ratio. Lanes were considerably narrower. Inner lanes seldom rats straight but often twisted and turned.
- One of the most distinctive features of Harappan cities was the carefully planned drainage system. It seems that streets with drains were laid out first and then houses built along them. If domestic waste water had to flow into the street drains, every house needed to have at least one wall along a street.
- Small drains made of burnt bricks were connected with bathing platforms and latrines of private houses joined the medium sized drains in the side streets. These drains ran into larger sewers in the main streets which were covered with bricks or dressed stone blocks. Corbelled-arch drains have also, been found. One of them is almost 6 ft. deep which functioned as main drain taking all the waste water out of the town.
- Most distinctive feature is number of burnt-brick drains at Mohenjodaro and Lothal. There are drains in all larger streets and smaller lanes also. There is no system of street drainage at Kalibangan.
- The average size of brick used for houses was $7 \times 15 \times 30$ cm. but for construction of fortification walls the size of the brick was of larger size viz $10 \times 20 \times 40$ cm. Both sizes of bricks have identical proportions 1 : 2 : 4, that the width is double the thickness and the length four times, the thickness.
- Doorways and windows rarely opened out into the main street, but faced side lanes. Some houses have remains of staircases to reach a second storey or the roof. Often in a room that could be reached from the outside and perhaps used by passers-by. Almost every house had a bathroom and in some cases there is evidence of bathrooms on the first floor.
- Earlier it was thought that all cities were having a standard division into high in western citadel and a lower town to the east reflecting the division of the cities into rulers and the service communities with the crafts workshop located in the lower city. But this interpretation is not correct because large public buildings market areas large and small private houses as well as crafts workshops have been found in all areas.
- While most Harappan settlements have a small high western part and a larger lower eastern section, there are variations. At sites such as Dholavira and Lothal (Gujarat), the entire settlement was fortified, and sections within the town were also separated by walls. The Citadel within Lothal was not walled off, but was built at a height.
- Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the citadel mound at Mohenjodaro is the Great Bath. This finely built brick structure measures 12m, by 7m. and is nearly 3m deep from the surrounding pavement. It is approached at either end by flights of steps. The floor of the bath was constructed of sawn bricks set on edge in gypsum mortar with a layer of bitumen sandwiched between the inner outer brick layers.
- Immediately to the west of the Great Bath at Mohenjodaro is a group of 27 blocks of bricks work criss-crossed by narrow lanes. Overall it measures 50 m. east-west and 27 m. north-south. Somewhat similar structures have been found at Harappa, Kalibangan and Lothal, These structures have been identified as granaries which were used for storing grains.
- An important structure is the dockyard found at Lothal. It is a large structure measuring 223 m. in length, 35 m. in width and 8 m. in depth, provided with an inlet channel (12.30 m. wide) in the eastern wall and a spillway. The inlet channel was connected to a river. By its side is a 240 m. long and 21.6 m. wide wharf.

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Consider the following statements and mark the option which is correct.
 - (i) The last 11 hymns are known as Balakhilya which are considered as the oldest part of Rigveda.
 - (ii) Mandalas are further divided into Astakas and upanishadas.
 - (iii) Rigveda comprises of 1028 hymns.
 - (iv) Third Mandala of Rigveda is composed by Manu.
 - (a) i, ii & iii
 - (b) ii, iii & iv
 - (c) i & iii
 - (d) all of the above.
2. Consider the following statements and mark the option which is correct.
 - (i) The third Mandala of Rigveda comprises of Gayatri Mantra, composed by Viswamitra.
 - (ii) Fourth Mandala depicts the word Haryupia which has been related with Harappa.
 - (iii) Ninth Mandal is dedicated to Soma.
 - (iv) Tenth Mandala describes about the four varnas.
 - (a) i, iii & iv
 - (b) i, ii & iv
 - (c) i, ii, iii & iv
 - (d) i only
3. Consider the following statements and mark the option which is correct.
 - (i) First type Krishna's description has been found in Mundaka Upanishada.
 - (ii) Gaytri Mantra is dedicated to Soma, who was deity of Sun family.
 - (iii) Veda means knowledge.
 - (iv) Rigveda is divided into 10 Mandalas.
 - (a) i, ii, iii & iv
 - (b) iii only
 - (c) i, iv
 - (d) iii & iv
4. Consider the following statements and mark the option which is correct.
 - (i) Atharvaveda is related to some Non-Aryan traditions like magical charm & spell.
 - (ii) Somaveda is an elaborate elucidation of Rituals.
 - (iii) Aitreya and Kausilaki Brahmanas are related with Rigveda.
 - (iv) Satpath Brahamana, related with Yajurveda, describes about Aryan's extention in Gangeticvalley.
 - (a) ii & iv
 - (b) ii only
 - (c) i, iii & iv
 - (d) all of the above.
5. Consider the following statements and mark the option which is correct.
 - (i) Aryankas are philosophical in content.
 - (ii) Rituals related to agriculture have also been described in Satpath Brahman related with Yajurveda.
 - (iii) Upanishadas are called Vedanta.
 - (iv) Total number of Upanishadas are 108, but according to Shankracharya number of Upanishadas is 15.
 - (a) i & iii
 - (b) all of the above.
 - (c) none of the above
 - (d) i, ii & iii