

CHAPTER 1

THEME ONE

Bricks, Beads and Bones

The Harappan Civilisation

What we know about the Harappan civilisation (archaeological evidence)

- The Harappan seal Made of a stone is called steatite
- The Indus valley civilisation is also called the Harappan culture.
- Objects that are found include seals, beads, weights, stone blades and baked bricks.
- These objects were found from areas as far apart as Afghanistan, Jammu, Baluchistan (Pakistan) and Gujarat.
- Harappa, the first site where this unique culture was discovered is dated between c. 2600 and 1900 BCE.
- There were earlier and later cultures, often called Early Harappan and Late Harappan, in the same area.
- Early Harappa culture – Before 2600 BCE
- Mature Harappa culture – 2600 BCE to 1900 BCE and
- Late Harappa culture – After 1900 BCE
- The Harappan civilisation is sometimes called the Mature Harappan culture to distinguish it from these cultures.

Harappan culture (beginning)

- Prior to the Mature Harappan culture, there were several archaeological cultures associated with distinctive pottery, agriculture, pastoralism, and crafts.
- Settlements were generally small
- There were virtually no large buildings.
- There was a break between the Early Harappan and the Harappan civilisation
- The break is evident from large-scale burning at some sites, as well as the abandonment of certain settlements.

- Mature Harappan culture developed in some of the areas occupied by the Early Harappan cultures.
- The Harappans ate a wide range of plant and animal products, including fish.
- Grains found at Harappan sites include wheat, barley, lentil, chickpea and sesame.
- Millets are found from sites in Gujarat. Traces of rice are relatively rare.
- Animal bones found at Harappan sites include those of cattle, sheep, goat, buffalo and pig.
- Animals were domesticated.
- Bones of wild species such as boar, deer and gharial are also found.
- Bones of fish and fowl are also found.

Agricultural technologies

- Prevalence of agriculture is indicated by finds of grain.
- Representations on seals and terracotta sculpture indicate that the bull was known
- Oxen were used for ploughing.
- Terracotta models of the plough have been found at sites in Cholistan and at Banawali (Haryana).
- Evidence of a ploughed field at Kalibangan (Rajasthan), associated with Early Harappan levels
- Two different crops were grown together.
- Most Harappan sites are located in semi-arid lands, where irrigation was probably required for agriculture.
- Traces of canals have been found at the Harappan site of Shortughai in Afghanistan, but not in Punjab or Sind.
- It is also likely that water drawn from wells was used for irrigation.
- Water reservoirs found in Dholavira (Gujarat) may have been used to store water for agriculture.

The plight of Harappa

- Harappa was the first site to be discovered but it was badly destroyed by brick robbers.
- Thus, many of the ancient structures at the site were damaged. In contrast, Mohenjodaro was far better preserved.

Mohenjodaro: A Planned Urban Centre

- The most unique feature of the Harappan civilisation was the development of urban centres.
- Mohenjodaro is the most well-known site (the first site to be discovered was Harappa)
- The settlement is divided into two sections, one smaller but higher (Citadel) and the other much larger but lower (Lower Town)

Citadel

- The Citadel owes its height to the fact that buildings were constructed on mud brick platforms.
- It was walled, which meant that it was physically separated from the Lower Town.

Citadels (Variations)

- 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.

Citadel (used for special public purposes)

- Excavated at Mohenjo-daro in Sindh, Pakistan.
- This Citadel include the warehouse and the Great Bath.
- The Great Bath was a large rectangular tank in a courtyard surrounded by a corridor on all four sides.
- The Great Bath is located at the centre of the Citadel, is made of fine baked waterproof mud bricks and a thick layer of bitumen (natural tar – presumably to keep water from seeping through the walls), which indicates that it was used for holding water.
- This huge deep bath could have been a place for ritual bathing or religious ceremonies.
- It is the earliest public water tank of the ancient world.
- Adjacent to it are a well that was used to supply water to the bath.

Lower Town

- The Lower Town was also walled.
- Several buildings were built on platforms, which served as foundations.

- The settlement was first planned and then implemented accordingly.
- Other signs of planning include bricks, which, whether sun-dried or baked, were of a standardised ratio, where the length and breadth were four times and twice the height respectively.
- Such bricks were used at all Harappan settlements.

Laying out drains

- One of the most distinctive features of Harappan cities was the carefully planned drainage system.
- In Lower Town roads and streets were laid out along an approximate “grid” pattern, intersecting at right angles.
- Streets with drains were laid out first and then houses built along them.
- Every house was connected to the street drains.
- Drainage systems were not unique to the larger cities, but were found in smaller settlements as well.
- At Lothal for example, while houses were built of mud bricks, drains were made of burnt bricks.

Domestic architecture

- The Lower Town at Mohenjodaro provides examples of residential buildings.
- Many were centred on a courtyard, with rooms on all sides.
- The courtyard was probably the centre of activities such as cooking and weaving, particularly during hot and dry weather.
- No windows in the walls along the ground level.
- The main entrance does not give a direct view of the interior or the courtyard (taking care of the concern of privacy)
- Every house had its own bathroom paved with bricks, with drains connected through the wall to the street drains.
- Some houses have remains of staircases to reach a second storey or the roof.
- Many houses had wells, often in a room that could be reached from the outside and perhaps used by passers-by.

Burials

- At burials in Harappan sites the dead were generally laid in pits.
- Some graves contain pottery and ornaments
- Jewellery has been found in burials of both men and women.

- In the excavations at the cemetery in Harappa in the mid-1980s, an ornament consisting of three shell rings, a jasper (a kind of semi-precious stone) bead and hundreds of micro beads was found near the skull of a male.
- In some instances the dead were buried with copper mirrors.
- Harappans did not believe in burying precious things with the dead.

Artefacts

- Rare objects made of valuable materials are generally concentrated in large settlements like Mohenjodaro and Harappa and are rarely found in the smaller settlements.
- For example, miniature pots of faience, perhaps used as perfume bottles, are found mostly in Mohenjodaro and Harappa, and there are none from small settlements like Kalibangan. (*Faience -a material made of ground sand or silica mixed with colour and a gum and then fired*)
- Gold too was rare, and as at present, probably precious – all the gold jewellery found at Harappan sites was recovered from hoards (*Hoards are objects kept carefully by people, often inside containers such as pots*)

Craft Production

- Chanhudaro is a tiny devoted to craft production, including bead-making, shell-cutting, metal-working, seal-making and weight-making.
- The variety of materials used to make beads is remarkable: stones like carnelian (of a beautiful red colour), jasper, crystal, quartz and steatite; metals like copper, bronze and gold; and shell, faience and terracotta or burnt clay.
- Some beads were made of two or more stones, cemented together, some of stone with gold caps.
- Specialised drills have been found at Chanhudaro, Lothal and more recently at Dholavira.
- Finished products (such as beads) from Chanhudaro and Lothal were taken to the large urban centres such as Mohenjodaro and Harappa
- Nageshwar and Balakot settlements are near the coast – These were specialised centres for making shell objects – including bangles, ladles and inlay, which were taken to other settlements.
- Craft production was undertaken in large cities such as Mohenjodaro and Harappa.

Procurement of Materials used for craft production

- Clay were locally available
- stone, timber and metal had to be procured from outside the alluvial plain.

- Terracotta toy models of bullock carts suggest that this was one important means of transporting goods and people across land routes.
- Riverine routes along the Indus and its tributaries, as well as coastal routes were also probably used.
- Shortughai (Afghanistan) - source of lapis lazuli, a blue stone that was apparently very highly valued
- Lothal which was near sources of carnelian (from Bharuch in Gujarat), steatite (from south Rajasthan and north Gujarat) and metal (from Rajasthan).
- Khetri region of Rajasthan (for copper) and south India (for gold).
- Copper was also probably brought from Oman
- Mesopotamian texts datable to the third millennium BCE refer to copper coming from a region called Magan, perhaps a name for Oman
- Mesopotamian texts mention contact with regions named Dilmun (probably the island of Bahrain), Magan and Meluhha, possibly the Harappan region.

Seals, Script, Weights

Seals and sealings

- Seals and sealings were used to facilitate long-distance communication.
- Harappan seals usually have a line of writing, probably containing the name and title of the owner.
- The script remains undeciphered to date
- It is apparent that the script was written from right to left

Weights

- Exchanges were regulated by a precise system of weights, usually made of a stone called chert and generally cubical with no markings.
- The lower denominations of weights were binary (1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, etc. up to 12,800), while the higher denominations followed the decimal system.
- The smaller weights were probably used for weighing jewellery and beads.
- Metal scale-pans have also been found.

Ancient Authority

- If we look for a centre of power or for depictions of people in power, archaeological records provide no immediate answers.

Theories assumed by archaeologists

1. Harappan society had no rulers, and that everybody enjoyed equal status.
2. There was no single ruler but several, that Mohenjodaro had a separate ruler, Harappa another, and so forth.
3. There was a single state, given the similarity in

artefacts, the evidence for planned settlements, the standardised ratio of brick size, and the establishment of settlements near sources of raw material (the third theory seems the most plausible)

The End of the Civilisation

- There is evidence that by c. 1800 BCE most of the Mature Harappan sites in regions such as Cholistan had been abandoned.
- Several explanations have been put forward. These range from climatic change, deforestation, excessive floods, the shifting and/or drying up of rivers, to overuse of the landscape.
- Some of these “causes” may hold for certain settlements, but they do not explain the collapse of the entire civilisation.

Discovering the Harappan Civilisation

- Cunningham, the first Director-General of the ASI, began archaeological excavations in the mid-nineteenth century
- Seals were discovered at Harappa by archaeologists

such as Daya Ram Sahni in the early decades of the twentieth century

- Another archaeologist, Rakhal Das Banerji found similar seals at Mohenjodaro
- In 1924, John Marshall, Director-General of the ASI, announced the discovery of a new civilisation in the Indus valley to the world.

Techniques used for excavation

- Generally, the lowest layers are the oldest and the highest are the most recent. The study of these layers is called stratigraphy.
- Artefacts found in layers can be assigned to specific cultural periods and can thus provide the cultural sequence for a site.
- An extensive survey in Kutch has revealed a number of Harappan settlements and explorations in Punjab and Haryana have added to the list of Harappan sites.
- While Kalibangan, Lothal, Rakhi Garhi and most recently Dholavira have been discovered, explored and excavated as part of these efforts, fresh explorations continue.

Exercise

Level - 1

1. Which of the following settlements was exclusively devoted to craft productions?
(a) Chanhudaro (b) Mohenjodaro
(c) Lothal (d) Dholavira
2. The first site to be discovered was
(a) Mohenjodaro (b) Harappa
(c) Lothal (d) Kalibangan
3. The Harappan seal was made up of which of the following materials?
(a) Copper (b) Steatite
(c) Bronze (d) None of the above
4. Mesopotamian texts mention trade and commerce with which of the following regions?
(a) Dilmun (b) Magan
(c) Meluhha (d) All of the above
5. Which of the following Animal bones was not found at Harappan sites?
(a) Cattle (b) Sheep
(c) Buffalo (d) Cow
6. Which of the following Grains was found at Harappan sites ?
(a) Wheat (b) Barley
(c) Lentil (d) All of the above
7. Millets are found from sites of which of the following regions?
(a) Gujrat (b) Sindh
(c) Punjab (d) Rajasthan
8. Select the wrong statements with respect to Harappa civilization
(a) There were no evidence of rice cultivation
(b) Animals were domesticated.
(c) Bones of wild species such as boar, deer are found.
(d) Bones of fish and fowl are also found.
9. Chanhudaro and Lothal were famous for which of the following craft productions?
(a) Beads
(b) Pottery
(c) Terracotta toy
(d) Stone artefacts

10. Archaeologists have also found evidence of a ploughed field at Kalibangan (Rajasthan), associated with which of the following cultures ?
(a) Early Harappa culture
(b) Mature Harappa culture
(c) Late Harappa culture
(d) None of the above
11. Most of the Harappan sites were located in
(a) Semi-arid regions (b) Arid regions
(c) Alluvial planes (d) Doab belt
12. Traces of canals have been found at which of the following Harappan sites?
(a) Shortughai (Afghanistan)
(b) Punjab or Sind
(c) Banawali (Haryana)
(d) Kalibangan (Rajasthan)
13. Water reservoirs found in which of the following Harappan sites?
(a) Baluchistan (Pakistan)
(b) Dholavira (Gujarat)
(c) Mohenjodaro
(d) Banawali (Haryana).

Level - 2

14. There was a break between which of the following civilisations?
(a) The Early Harappan and the Harappan civilisation
(b) The Harappan and the Mature Harappan civilisation
(c) The Mature Harappan and the Late Harappan cultures
(d) All of the above
15. Mesopotamian texts refer to copper coming from a region called Magan.
Magan represents which of the following regions?
(a) Egypt (b) Oman
(c) Bahrain (d) Harappan region
16. Which of the following is the most plausible theories assumed by archaeologists?
(a) Harappan society had no rulers, and that everybody enjoyed equal status.
(b) There was no single ruler but several
(c) There was a single state
(d) None of the above

17. Which of the following statements is true about Citadels?
- The settlements were smaller but higher than Lower Town
 - Citadels were not physically separated from the Lower Town.
 - The buildings in citadels were constructed on wooden platforms
 - All statements are true
18. The roads and streets of which of the following settlements were laid out along an approximate "grid" pattern, intersecting at right angles.
- Lower Town
 - Citadel
 - great bath area of Mohenjodaro
 - Both (a) and (b)
19. Which of the following Harappan settlements were fortified entirely?
- Dholavira
 - Lothal
 - Kalibangan
 - Both (a) and (b)
20. Which of the following settlement is located near the coast.
- Chanhudaro
 - Dholavira
 - Nageshwar
 - Mohenjodaro
21. Which of the following was an important means of transporting goods and people across land routes in Harappan civilization?
- Horses
 - Bullock carts
 - Unicorns
 - None of the above
22. The Harappans procured lapis lazuli, a blue stone that was apparently very highly valued materials, for craft production from which of the following regions?
- Afghanistan
 - South India region
 - Mesopotamia
 - Egypt
23. Find the incorrect statement about the system of weights in Harappan civilization
- The lower denominations of weights were binary
 - The higher denominations followed the decimal system.
 - The weights were made of a stone called chert
 - The weights were rectangular in shape with no markings.
24. Find the correct statement about The Great Bath
- The Great Bath was a large circular tank in a courtyard
 - It was located at the centre of the Lower town
 - It was meant for some kind of a special ritual bath.
 - It is made of fine baked waterproof thick layer of bitumen without the use of any single mud bricks

Answers

Level-1

1. (a) 2. (b) 3. (b) 4. (d) 5. (d) 6. (d) 7. (a) 8. (a) 9. (a) 10. (a)
11. (a) 12. (a) 13. (b)

Level-2

14. (a) 15. (b) 16. (c) 17. (a) 18. (a) 19. (d) 20. (c) 21. (b) 22. (a) 23. (d)
24. (c)

Explanations

Level - 1

1. a • Chanhudaro is a tiny settlement almost exclusively devoted to craft production, including bead-making, shell-cutting, metal-working, seal-making and weight-making.
2. b • 1921 M.S. Vats begins excavations at Harappa
1925 Excavations begin at Mohenjodaro
 - Mohenjodaro is the most well-known site, the first site to be discovered was Harappa.
3. b • The Harappan seal is possibly the most distinctive artefact of the Harappan or Indus valley civilisation. Made of a stone called steatite
4. d • Mesopotamian texts mention contact with regions named Dilmun (probably the island of Bahrain), Magan and Meluhha, possibly the Harappan region.
5. d • Animal bones found at Harappan sites include those of cattle, sheep, goat, buffalo and pig.
6. d • Grains found at Harappan sites include wheat, barley, lentil, chickpea and sesame.
7. a • Millets are found from sites in Gujarat.
8. a • Animals were domesticated.
 - Bones of wild species such as boar, deer and *gharial* are also found
 - Bones of fish and fowl are also found.
 - Finds of rice are relatively rare.
9. a • Chanhudaro and Lothal were devoted to craft production, including bead-making, shell-cutting, metal-working, seal-making and weight-making.
10. a • Archaeologists have also found evidence of a ploughed field at Kalibangan (Rajasthan), associated with Early Harappan levels
11. a • Most Harappan sites are located in semi-arid lands, where irrigation was probably required for agriculture.
12. a • Traces of canals have been found at the Harappan site of Shortughai in Afghanistan, but not in Punjab or Sind.
13. b • Water reservoirs found in Dholavira (Gujarat) may have been used to store water for agriculture.

Level - 2

14. a • 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.
 - It appears that there was a break between the Early Harappan and the Harappan civilisation, evident from large-scale burning at some sites, as well as the abandonment of certain settlements.
15. b • Mesopotamian texts datable to the third millennium BCE refer to copper coming from a region called Magan, perhaps a name for Oman
16. c • The most plausible theory - There was a single state, given the similarity in artefacts, the evidence for planned settlements, the standardised ratio of brick size, and the establishment of settlements near sources of raw material
17. a • The settlement is divided into two sections, one smaller but higher and the other much larger but lower.
 - Archaeologists designate these as the Citadel and the Lower Town respectively.
 - The Citadel owes its height to the fact that buildings were constructed on mud brick platforms.
 - It was walled, which meant that it was physically separated from the Lower Town.
18. a • One of the most distinctive features of Harappan cities was the carefully planned drainage system.
 - In the Lower Town, the roads and streets were laid out along an approximate "grid" pattern, intersecting at right angles. It seems that streets with drains were laid out first and then houses built along them.
19. d • 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.

- 20. c** • Nageshwar and Balakot settlements are near the coast.
- These were specialised centres for making shell objects
- 21. b** • Terracotta toy models of bullock carts suggest that this was one important means of transporting goods and people across land routes.
- 22. a** • The Harappans procured materials for craft production in various ways.
- For instance, they established settlements such as Shortughai, in far-off Afghanistan, near the best source of lapis lazuli, a blue stone that was apparently very highly valued
- 23. d** • Exchanges were regulated by a precise system of weights usually made of a stone called chert and generally cubical with no markings.
- Lower denominations of weights were binary (1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, etc. up to 12,800), while the higher denominations followed the decimal system.
- 24. c** • Excavated at Mohenjo-daro in Sindh, Pakistan.
- This Citadel include the warehouse and the Great Bath.
- The Great Bath was a large rectangular tank in a courtyard surrounded by a corridor on all four sides.
- The Great Bath is located at the centre of the Citadel, is made of fine baked waterproof mud bricks and a thick layer of bitumen.