

3. The Harappan Civilization

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3.1 Harappan Civilization

Archaeological excavation first began in 1921 CE at Harappa in the Punjab on the banks of the river Ravi. That is how this civilization came to be known as Harappan Civilization. It is also known as Indus Civilization.

Excavations were also carried out at Mohen-jo-daro, a place about 650 km to the south of Harappa in the Indus valley. There was a striking resemblance between the remains of structures and artefacts found at the two places. Similar remains have been found at Dholavira, Lothal, Kalibangan, Daimabad, etc.



Try this.

Show the sites of Harappan civilization on an outline map of India.



Generally, the same characteristics are seen in all the places of Harappan Civilization. These include town planning, roads, construction of houses, drainage system, seals, pots and toys and burial customs.



Can you tell ?

- Describe the structure of houses in your locality.
- Do they have flat roofs or tiled, sloping roofs?

3.2 Housing and town planning

The houses and other structures in Harappan Civilization were mainly built with baked bricks. In some places, unbaked bricks and stones were also used for construction. The houses had rooms built around a central courtyard. The houses had wells, bathrooms and toilets. There was an excellent drainage system in which baked earthen conduits were used. The streets had covered drains built with bricks. This shows great concern regarding public health.

The streets were broad and laid out in a grid pattern. Houses were built in the rectangular blocks created by them.



Harappan Civilization well



Can you tell ?

- What problems regarding health and hygiene will arise if the drains are not covered ?

The towns were divided into two or more sections and each section had separate fortification.



Try this.

Cut a potato into half. Carve out some letters or figures on the cut surfaces using a nail. Dip the surface into ink or colour and then press it on a piece of paper. Observe what happens.

3.3 Seals and pots

The seals of the Harappan Civilization were mainly square-shaped and made from a stone called steatite. These seals bear pictures of animals. They include pictures of real animals like bulls, buffaloes, oxen, elephants, rhinos, tigers etc. and also of imaginary ones like the unicorn. Human figures are also seen. These seals were used as stamps.

Earthen pots of various types and shapes have been found at the excavation



Seals



Do this.

Interview a person skilled in making earthen pots to learn how they are made.

- What type of clay is used?
- Where do we get the clay?
- How much time is needed to make one pot?

sites of Harappan Civilization. There are red terra cotta pots with patterns and designs in black colour. The patterns include fishscales, interlocking circles, *pipal* leaves etc.

The Harappan people buried their dead. They used to bury earthen pots with the bodies.



Earthenware



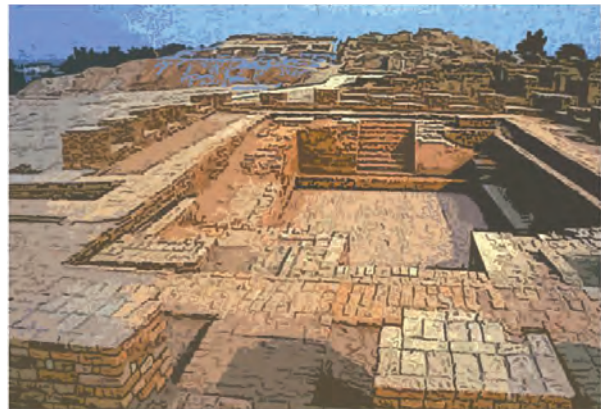
Observe.

Visit a swimming tank in your locality. Observe how the water in the tank is changed.

Compare a modern swimming tank to the Harappan Bath.

3.4 The Great Bath

A spacious bath has been discovered at Mohen-jo-daro. The tank in the Great Bath was nearly 2.5 metres deep. It was 12 metres long and 7 metres wide. It was lined with baked bricks to prevent seepage of water. There were steps leading down to the tank. There was also a provision for draining, cleaning and re-filling the tank from time to time.



The Great Bath at Mohen-jo-daro



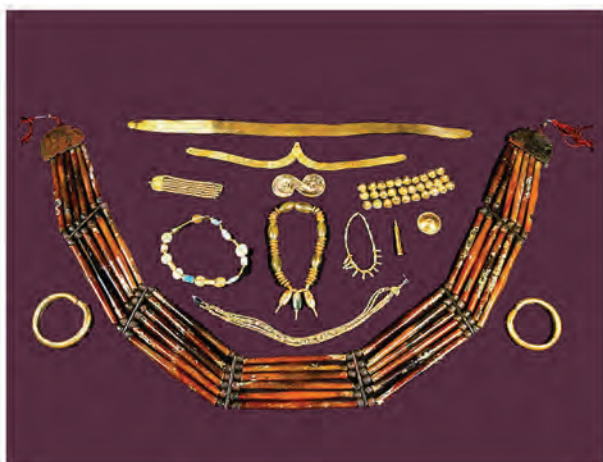
Can you tell?

- Name the fruits and crops grown in your area.
- What clothing do the people in your area use?
- Write the names of the ornaments you know.

3.5 Life in the Harappa Civilization

The Harappan people practised agriculture. The excavation at Kalibangan provides evidence of a ploughed field. The people there grew different crops, mainly wheat and barley. In Rajasthan, barley was grown on a large scale while in Gujarat, it was *ragi*. Peas, sesame and lentils (*masoor*) were also cultivated. The Harappan people were also familiar with cotton.

The statues, the pictures on the seals and the remains of cloth found in the excavations indicate that the Harappan people used to weave cloth. The dress of both men and women consisted of knee-length cloth and an upper garment.



Ornaments in Harappan Civilization

Many types of ornaments have been found in excavations. They are made of gold, copper, precious stones as also shells, cowries, seeds etc. Men and women both used multistrand necklaces, rings, armlets and waistbands. Women wore bangles right up to their upper arm.

A statue found at a Harappan site presents an excellent specimen of their art. It shows the man's facial features very clearly. A cloak with a beautiful trefoil pattern is draped across his shoulder.



A specimen of Harappan art



Try this.

Visit a grocery shop nearby. From where does the shopkeeper buy the items in his shop? List the items.

3.6 Trade

The Harappan people carried on trade within India as well as with countries outside. The Indus Valley was known for its high quality cotton. This cotton was exported to other regions like West Asia, Southern Europe and Egypt. Cotton cloth, too, was exported. The traders of the Harappan Civilization provided muslin cloth to Egypt. Silver, zinc, gemstones, rubies, *deodar* wood were some of the items that were imported from Kashmir, South India, Iran, Afghanistan and Baluchistan. Trade was carried on both by land routes and sea routes. Some of the excavated seals bear pictures of ships. A huge dockyard has been discovered at Lothal. The trade of the Harappan Civilization was carried on along the coastline of the Arabian Sea.



An artist's visualization of the dockyard at Lothal (Reconstructed with the help of the remains)

3.7 Reasons for decline of the Harappan Civilization

Frequent floods, invasions by foreign tribes, decline in trade were some of the reasons for the decline of the Harappan Civilization. Some regions became arid due to weakening of monsoon, drying up of river basins, earthquakes, changes in sea-level, etc. People migrated to other places leading to the decline of cities.

The Harappan Civilization was a prosperous and flourishing urban civilization. It laid the foundation of the Indian Civilization.



Exercise

1. Answer in one sentence.

- (1) How did the civilization get the name Harappa?
- (2) What patterns are seen on the Harappan pots?
- (3) What cloth did the Harappan traders supply to Egypt?

2. What will you do when you visit an ancient site to obtain more information about it, to conserve it, etc?

3. Draw a picture of the Great Bath at Mohen-jo-daro.

4. In the following chart, fill in the details regarding human life during the Harappan period.

Major Crops	Clothes	Ornaments
(1) ----	----	----
(2) ----	----	----
(3) ----	----	----
(4) ----	----	----

5. Answer in one word and frame similar questions. Write their answers.

What stone was used to make the Harappan seals?

6. On an outline map of the world, show the other civilizations that existed in other parts of the world during the Harappan period.

Activity :

- (1) Prepare an outline map of your school and show the various places like a library, playground, computer room, etc. on the map.
- (2) Prepare a detailed note on the grain storage system used in your family and your locality.



Harappan toys