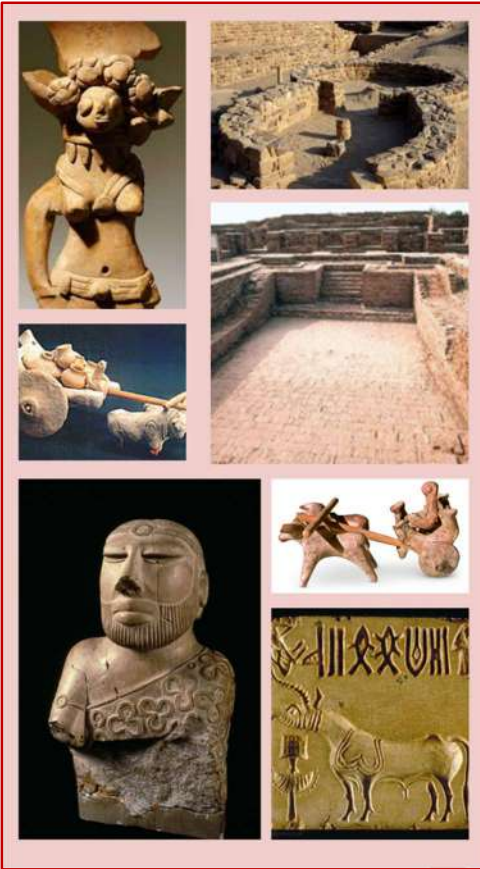


CHAPTER 1

THE STORY OF THE FIRST CITIES HARAPPAN ARCHEOLOGY

INTRODUCTION



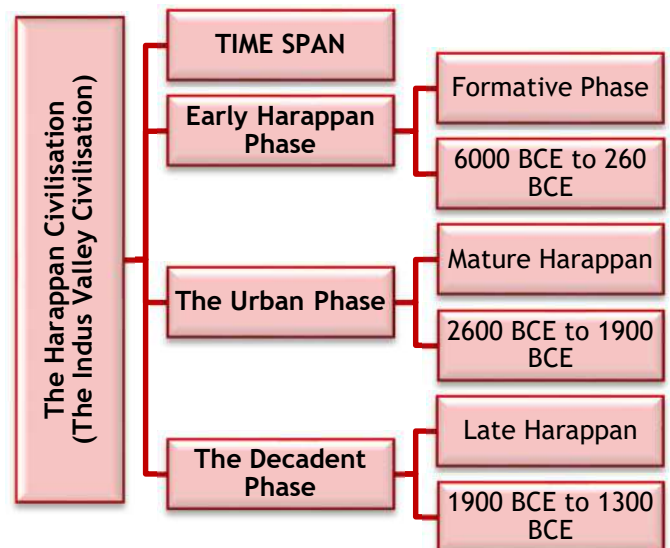
This chapter delves into the fascinating emergence of the **Harappan Civilization**, one of the earliest known urban cultures. It deals with a **broad overview** of early urban centers, exploring the growth of cities and the factors that enabled the development of sophisticated urban planning. The **discovery of the Harappan civilization** and the efforts that led to the unearthing of these ancient cities are highlighted, offering insights into how these once-forgotten cities came to light. Insights from **archaeological reports** about major Harappan site provides a glimpse into the detailed findings that have shaped our understanding of this civilization. Finally, the chapter discusses how **archaeologists and historians have utilized** these discoveries to reconstruct the social, economic, and cultural life of the Harappans, offering a deeper look into their contributions to early urbanism.

TOPICS COVERED

1. **Broad overview: Early Urban Centres.**
2. **Story of Discovery: Harappan civilization.**
3. **Excerpt: Archaeological report on a major site.**
4. **Discussion: How it has been utilized by archaeologists/historians.**

HARPPAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

1. More than **2000 Harappan archaeological sites** have been discovered in the Indian subcontinent.
2. Most of the sites are located between **The Indus and The Saraswati River basins**.
3. Among these, five major cities have been identified. These are **Rakhigarhi, Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Dholavira and Ganweriwala**.
4. **Grains** found at Harappan sites include wheat, barley, lentil, chickpea and sesame. Millets are found from sites in Gujarat.
5. **Animal bones** found at Harappan sites include those of cattle, sheep, goat, buffalo and pig.
6. Bones of wild species such as boar, deer and gharial are also found.



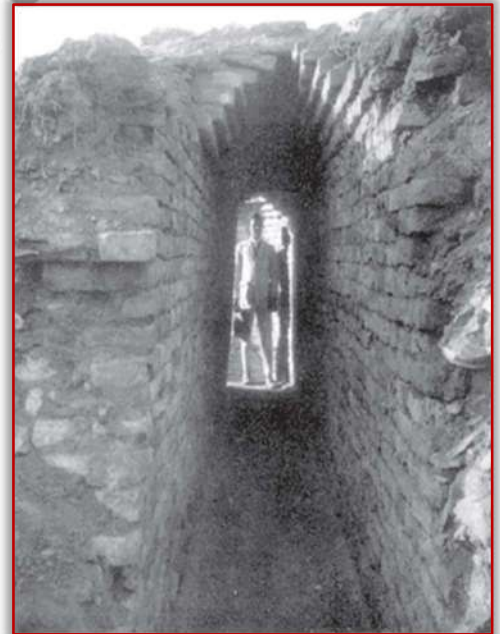
7. Representations on seals and terracotta sculpture indicate that the bull was known, and archaeologists extrapolate from this that oxen were used for ploughing.
8. Terracotta models of the plough have been found at sites in Cholistan and at Banawali (Haryana).
9. Archaeologists have also found evidence of a ploughed field at Kalibangan (Rajasthan), associated with Early Harappan levels
10. Traces of canals have been found at the Harappan site of Shortughai in Afghanistan, but not in Punjab or Sind.
11. Water reservoirs found in Dholavira (Gujarat) may have been used to store water for agriculture.



A PLANNED URBAN CENTRE

MOHANJODARO

1. Although Mohenjodaro is the most well-known site, the first site to be discovered was Harappa. The settlement is divided into two sections.
2. Archaeologists designate these as the Citadel and the Lower Town respectively.
3. The Citadel buildings were constructed on mud brick platforms.
4. It was walled and was physically separated from the Lower Town. The Lower Town was also walled.
5. Bricks, which, whether sun-dried or baked, were of a standardized ratio, where the length and breadth were four times and twice the height respectively.
6. One of the most distinctive features of Harappan cities was the carefully planned drainage system.
7. Roads and streets were laid out along an approximate "grid" pattern, intersecting at right angles.
8. Streets with drains were laid out first and then houses built along them.
9. The Lower Town at Mohenjodaro provides examples of residential buildings.
10. The courtyard was probably the center of activities such as cooking and weaving, particularly during hot and dry weather.
11. Every house had its own bathroom paved with bricks, with drains connected through the wall to the street drains.



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13. The total number of wells in Mohenjodaro was about 700.



THE CITADEL

- The **warehouse** - a massive structure of which the lower brick portions remain, while the upper portions, probably of wood, decayed long ago - and the Great Bath.
- The **Great Bath** was a large rectangular tank in a courtyard surrounded by a corridor on all four sides.
- There were rooms on three sides, in one of which was a large well.
- Across a lane to the north lay a smaller building with eight bathrooms, four on each side of a corridor, with drains from each bathroom connecting to a drain that ran along the corridor.
- Scholars have suggested that it was meant for some kind of a **special ritual bath**.



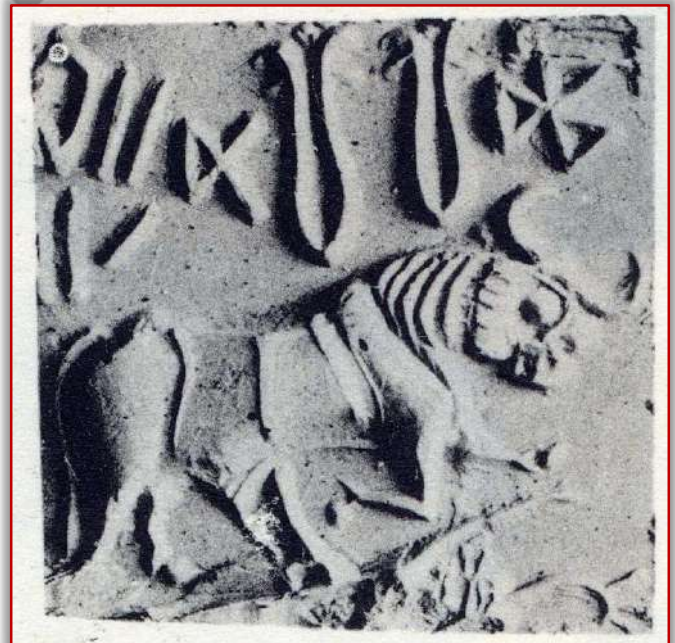
BURIALS

- At burials in Harappan sites the dead were generally laid in pits.
- Some graves contain pottery and ornaments, perhaps indicating a belief that these could be used in the afterlife.
- **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 microbeads was found near the skull of a male.
- In some instances the dead were buried with copper mirrors.



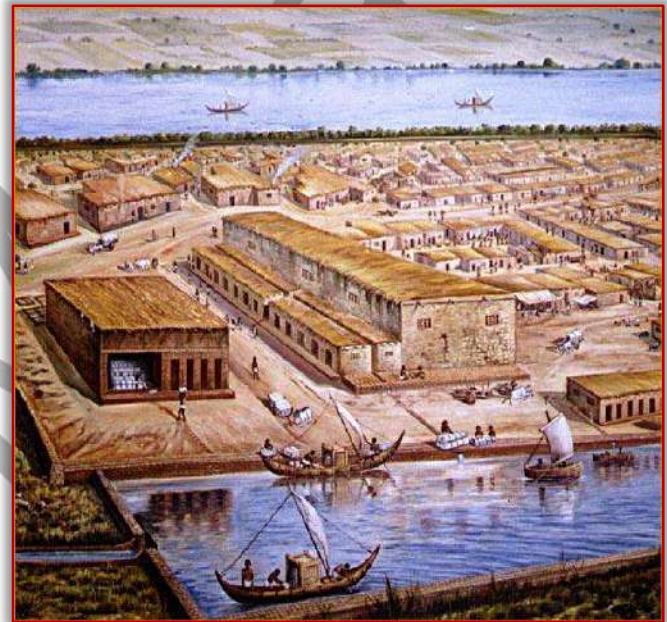
CRAFT PRODUCTION

- **Chanhudaro** is a tiny settlement, almost exclusively 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 moulded out of a paste made with steatite powder.
- The red colour of carnelian was obtained by firing the yellowish raw material and beads at various stages of production.
- **Specialised drills** have been found at Chanhudaro, Lothal and more recently at Dholavira.
- **Nageshwar and Balakot** were specialised centres for making shell objects - including bangles, ladles and inlay - which were taken to other settlements.
- **Finished products** (such as beads) from **Chanhudaro and Lothal** were taken to the large urban centres such as Mohenjodaro and Harappa.



CENTRES OF PRODUCTION

- Archaeologists usually look for the following: raw material such as stone nodules, whole shells, copper ore; tools; unfinished objects; rejects and waste material.
- Waste is one of the best indicators of craft work.
- **Craft production was also undertaken in large cities such as Mohenjodaro and Harappa.**
- Other such sites were **Shortughai**, in far-off Afghanistan, near the best source of lapis lazuli, a highly valued blue stone.
- **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).
- There is evidence in the Khetri area for what archaeologists call the Ganeshwar-Jodhpura culture, with its distinctive non-Harappan pottery and an unusual wealth of copper objects.
- It is possible that the inhabitants of this region supplied copper to the Harappans.

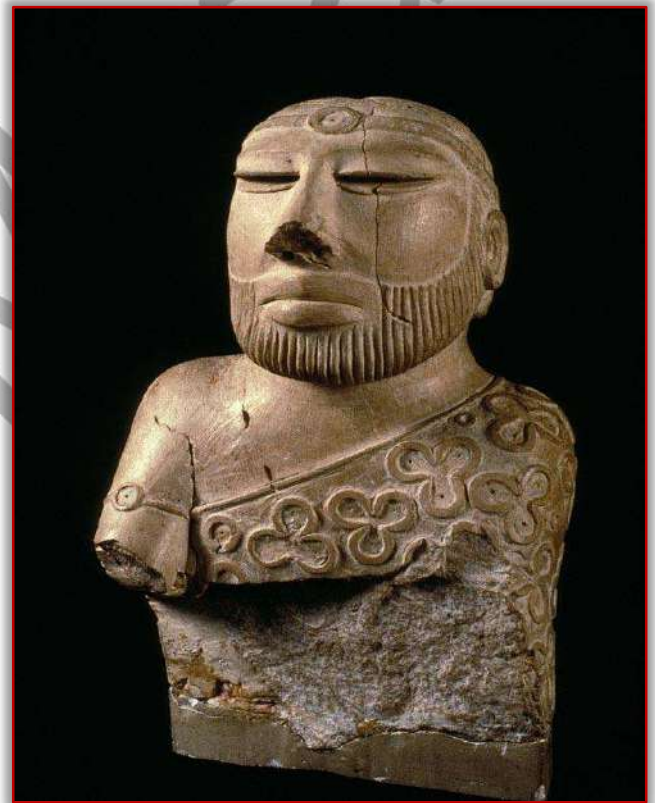


SEALS, SCRIPT, WEIGHTS

- **Seals and sealings** were used to facilitate long distance communication.
- The sealing also conveyed the identity of the sender.
- **Harappan seals usually have a line of writing**, probably containing the name and title of the owner.
- **Most inscriptions are short, the longest containing about 26 signs**
- It was evidently not alphabetical (where each sign stands for a vowel or a consonant) as it has just too many signs - somewhere between 375 and 400.



- The script was written from right to left as some seals show a wider spacing on the right and cramping on the left, as if the engraver began working from the right and then ran out of space.
- **Writing has been found:** seals, copper tools, rims of jars, copper and terracotta tablets, jewellery, bone rods, even an ancient sign board.
- **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), while the higher denominations followed the decimal system (160, 200, 320, 640).
- The smaller weights were probably used for weighing jewellery and beads.
- Metal scale-pans have also been found.



PALACES AND KINGS

- A large building found at Mohenjodaro was labelled as a palace by archaeologists but no spectacular finds were associated with it.
- A stone statue was labelled and continues to be known as the “**priest-king**”.
- It is likely that the Harappans practiced some sort of democratic system.

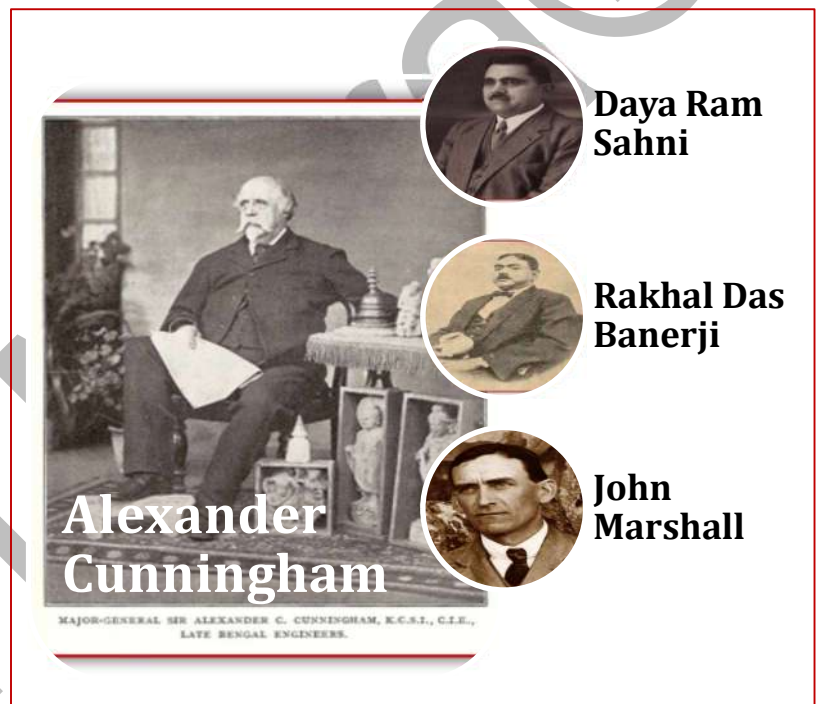
THE END OF THE CIVILISATION

- There is evidence that by c. 1800 BCE most of the **Mature Harappan sites** in regions such as **Cholistan had been abandoned**.
- In the few Harappan sites that continued to be occupied after 1900 BCE there appears to have been a transformation of material culture.
- House construction techniques deteriorated and large public structures were no longer produced.
- **Artifacts and settlements indicate a rural way of life in what are called “Late Harappan” or “successor cultures”**.
- 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.

- But they do not explain the collapse of the entire civilisation.

DISCOVERING THE HARAPPAN CIVILISATION

- Alexander Cunningham, the first Director-General of the ASI, began archaeological excavations in the mid nineteenth century.
- He used the accounts left by Chinese Buddhist pilgrims who had visited the subcontinent between the fourth and seventh centuries CE to locate early settlements.
- Although Harappan artefacts were found fairly often during the nineteenth century and some of these reached Cunningham, he did not realise how old these were.
- A Harappan seal was given to Cunningham by an Englishman.
- 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.
- Based on these finds, in 1924, John Marshall, Director-General of the ASI, announced the discovery of a new civilisation in the Indus valley to the world.
- It was then that the world knew not only of a new civilisation, but also of one contemporaneous with Mesopotamia.
- As S.N. Roy noted in The Story of Indian Archaeology, “Marshall left India three thousand years older than he had found her.”
- John Marshall was the first professional archaeologist to work in India, and brought his experience of working in Greece and Crete to the field.



NEW TECHNIQUES AND QUESTIONS

- R.E.M. Wheeler took over as Director General of the ASI in 1944.
- Wheeler recognised that it was necessary to follow the stratigraphy of the mound rather than dig mechanically along uniform horizontal lines.
- With the partition of the subcontinent and the creation of Pakistan, the major known sites became part of Pakistan. This has spurred Indian archaeologists to try and locate sites in India.
- An extensive survey in Kutch has revealed a number of Harappan settlements and explorations in Punjab and Haryana have been added to the list of Harappan sites.
- While Kalibangan, Lothal, Rakhigarhi and most recently Dholavira have been discovered, explored and excavated as part of these efforts, fresh explorations continue.

- Recovering artefacts is just the beginning of the archaeological enterprise.
- Archaeologists have to decide whether, for instance, an artefact is a tool or an ornament, or both, or something meant for ritual use.
- Sometimes, archaeologists have to take recourse to indirect evidence. For instance, there are traces of cotton at some Harappan sites.
- The problems of archaeological interpretation are perhaps most evident in attempts to reconstruct religious practices.
- Early archaeologists thought that certain objects which seemed unusual or unfamiliar may have had a religious significance.
- These included terracotta figurines of women, heavily jewelled, some with elaborate head-dresses. These were regarded as mother goddesses.
- Rare stone statue of men in an almost standardised posture, seated with one hand on the knee - such as the “priest-king” - was also similarly classified.
- In other instances, structures have been assigned ritual significance. These include the Great Bath and fire altars found at Kalibangan and Lothal.
- Some animals - such as the one-horned animal, often called the “unicorn” - depicted on seals seem to be mythical, composite creatures.
- In some seals, a figure shown seated cross-legged in a “yogic” posture, sometimes surrounded by animals, has been regarded as a depiction of “proto-Shiva”, that is, an early form of one of the major deities of Hinduism.
- Besides, conical stone objects have been classified as lingas.
- The earliest religious text, the Rigveda (compiled c. 1500-1000 BCE) mentions a god named Rudra, which is a name used for Shiva in later Puranic traditions.