

Indus Valley (Harappan) Civilization

These notes are your ultimate revision weapon to revise Indus Valley (Harappan) Civilization history. We've distilled years of previous exam questions (PYQs) into one powerful, concise resource. Everything you need to know, nothing you don't.

- **PYQs, Decoded:** All key concepts from past exams, organized and simplified.
- **Revise in Record Time:** Short, precise, and designed for last-minute review.
- **Focus on What Matters:** Master high-probability topics and boost your confidence.

Overview of the Indus Valley (Harappan) Civilization

1. Nature, Classification & Context



- **Human Society & Civilization**
 - Human society is considered unique due to its dependence on the **economy**, which is a major determinant of social change.
- **Classification of Historical Ages**
 - **Proto-historic Age:** A period where writing was known but remains undeciphered.
 - The Indus Valley Civilization is classified as **Proto-historic** for this reason.
- **Comparative Classification of Indian Societies**
 - Indus Valley Civilization: **Urban**
 - Rigvedic Society: **Pastoral**
 - Later Vedic Society: **Agrarian**
 - Medieval Period: **Landlordism**
- **Global Context**
 - One of the three oldest ancient civilizations, alongside **Egypt** (Nile River) and **Mesopotamia**.

- **Sumerian (Mesopotamian)** civilization was the first to develop a proper writing system (cuneiform).

2. Origin, Discovery, and Theories

● **Discovery**

- First evidence discovered at **Harappa**, hence the name Harappan Civilization.
- Primary source of knowledge is **archaeological excavations**.
- **Alexander Cunningham** first excavated Harappa (1853, 1856) but failed to recognize its significance.
- Major excavations were overseen by **Sir John Marshall** (Director-General of ASI).

● **Key Archaeologists & Their Sites**

- **Daya Ram Sahni**: Excavated **Harappa** (1921-1925).
- **Rakhal Das Banerjee**: Excavated **Mohenjodaro** (1922).
- **E.J.H. Mackay**: Excavated **Chanhudaro** (1935-36), discovered a bead-making factory.
- **S.R. Rao**: Discovered and excavated **Lothal** (1954).
- **R.S. Bisht**: Excavated **Dholavira**.
- **N.G. Majumdar**: Worked at **Chanhudaro** and **Kaushambi**.
- **B.B. Lal**: Excavated Hastinapur.
- **J.P. Joshi**: Discovered Surkotada.
- *Not Associated*: **V.A. Smith** (a historian, not an excavator).

● **Precursor Site**

- **Mehrgarh** (Balochistan, Pakistan) provides the earliest evidence of **animal domestication and agriculture** in the subcontinent.

● **Theories of Origin**

- **E.J.H. Mackay & Mortimer Wheeler**: Supported theory of migration from **Sumer/Western Asia**.
- **Amalananda Ghosh & M. Rafique Mughal**: Argued for indigenous development from **Pre-Harappan cultures** in the **Ravi river region**, not inspired by Mesopotamia.

3. Characteristics & Material Culture

- **Technology & Materials (Bronze Age Society)**
 - **Metals Used:** Copper (first metal used), gold, silver, brass.
 - **Not Known: Iron** (Iron Age began in India ~1000 BC).
 - **Earliest evidence of silver** in India comes from this culture.
- **Script & Knowledge**
 - Used an undeciphered **pictographic script**.
 - Lacked knowledge of iron and defensive arrows.
- **Pottery & Art**
 - Well-made, strong, typically red in colour, often with **red-and-black** painted designs.
 - **Terracotta art** and seals depict animals like the elephant, rhinoceros, tiger, deer, and sheep (not lion).
- **Urban Planning & Infrastructure**
 - **Grid-pattern** city layout.
 - Widespread use of **burnt bricks**.
 - **Advanced drainage systems**.
 - No great palaces or temples were discovered.

4. Economy & Trade

- **Base: Agrarian** economy.
- **Innovations:**
 - **Earliest evidence of cotton cultivation and textile manufacturing** in India (~3000 BC).
- **Trade & Commerce:**
 - Significant **trading centre** with advanced trade and commerce.
 - Over **3000 seals** (often used in trade) are a key archaeological find.
- **Ports:**
 - **Lothal** was a major port city.
 - Other ports: Surkotada, Kuntasi, Balakot, Allahdino.

5. Religion & Beliefs

- **Nature:** Predominantly **secular**; religious element present but not dominant.
- **Deities:**
 - Worship of a **Mother Goddess**.
 - Worship of a male deity (**Pashupati/Shiva**), indicated by the **Pashupati seal** (depicting a three-faced god in a yogic posture) and cylindrical stones resembling **Lingams**.
 - Worship of plants, trees, and animals.
- **Practices:**
 - Evidence of **fire altars** and a developing **sacrificial tradition** (Kalibangan).
 - Evidence of beliefs in **spirits** and possible **rituals and sacrifice**.
 - The beginning of **idol worship** in India is traced to this Pre-Aryan period.

6. Key Harappan Sites & Findings

- **Pakistan:**
 - **Harappa (Ravi River):** First discovered site; **Cemetery R-37**.
 - **Mohenjodaro (Sindh):** "City of wells"; **Great Bath**; 'Dancing Girl' statue; humped bull seal.
 - **Chanhudaro (Sindh):** Bead-making factory.
- **India:**
 - **Gujarat:**
 - **Lothal (Bhogava River):** Dockyard; port city; **ivory scale**; evidence of **double/triple burials**.
 - **Dholavira:** Second largest site in India; advanced **water harvesting system**; **rock-cut architecture**; inscription of **ten large-sized signs**; three-part division (citadel, middle town, lower town).
 - **Rajasthan:**

- **Kalibangan (Ghaggar River):** Earliest ploughed field; fire altars; terracotta cake of a horned deity; double burials.
- **Haryana:**
 - **Banawali (Ghaggar Valley):** Terracotta replica of a plough.
 - **Rakhigarhi (Hisar District):** Largest Harappan site in India (350 hectares).
- **Punjab: Ropar (Sutlej River).**
- **Uttar Pradesh: Alamgirpur, Hulas, Sonauli** (125 human burials).
- **Maharashtra: Daimabad.**
- **Jammu and Kashmir: Manda.**
- **Other Important Sites:** Rangpur (Saurashtra), Padri (Gujrat), Surkotada, Balu (Haryana), Dadheri (Punjab).
- **Non-Harappan Sites:**
 - **Pataliputra:** Major city in the later Mahajanapada period.
 - **Sohgaura:** Known for a Mauryan-era copper plate inscription.

7. Animals in Harappan Culture

- **Depicted on Seals:** Humped bull (most common), elephant, buffalo, tiger, rhinoceros, goat, sheep.
- **Absent or Debated:**
 - **Horse:** Not depicted on seals; its presence is debated. At Surkotada site, horse remains, specifically bones dating from the Mature Harappan period were found.
 - **Lion:** Remains not discovered at any site.
 - **Cow:** Known but **not represented** in terracotta art or on seals.

8. Contrast with Vedic Culture

- **Indus Valley: Non-Aryan, urban**, pictographic script (undeciphered), **no iron**, evidence of idol worship (Mother Goddess, Pashupati), red-and-black pottery.

- **Vedic Culture: Aryan, rural**, script is understood, **iron weapons**, grey pottery.

9. Decline & Chronology

- **Cause of Decline:** A study suggests a fall due to **continuous low rainfall (drought) for 900 years**.
- **Current Status:** Mohenjodaro and Harappa are now **dead** (non-inhabited) archaeological sites.
- **Technological Chronology in India:**
 1. **Urban Culture** (Indus Valley Civilization)
 2. **Iron Plough** (Vedic Period, ~1000 BC)
 3. **Punch-marked silver coins** (6th Century BC)
 4. **Gold coins** (Introduced by Indo-Greek rulers in 2nd Century BC)

10. Appendix: Mesoamerican Civilizations (North-South Sequence)

- Aztec (Northern Mexico) → Maya (Guatemala) → Muisca (Colombia) → Inca (Peru)

Know More about Indus Valley (Harappan) Civilization:

- [Indus Valley Civilization One Liner Questions & Answers](#)
- [Indus Valley Civilization – Old Year Questions and Answers](#)