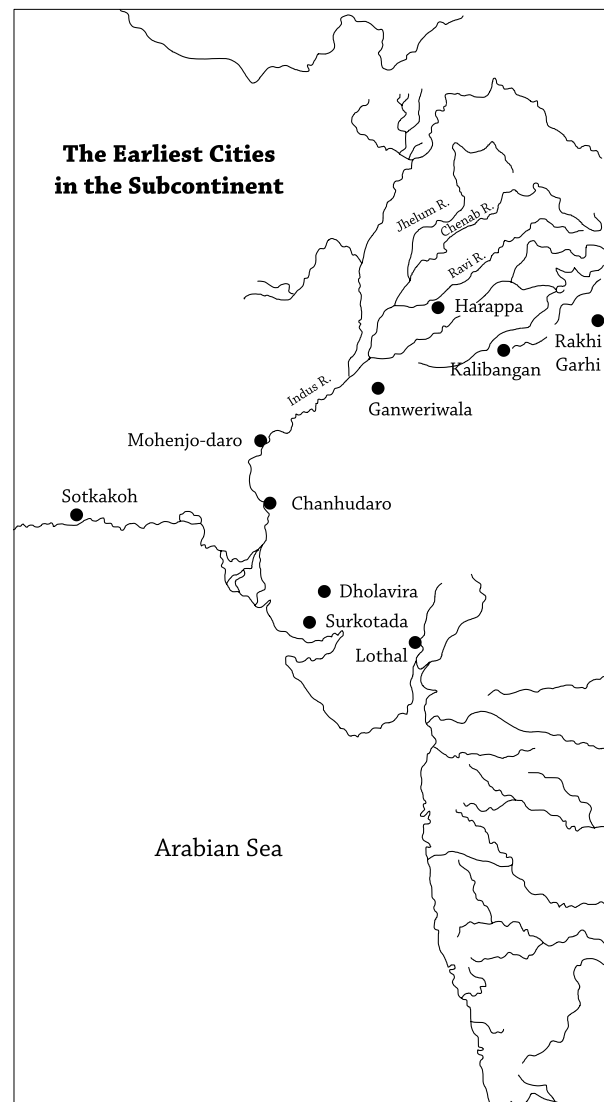




After the beginning of agriculture, the discovery and use of metals mark the next major change in the progress of civilisation. Copper was the first metal to be discovered and used by man. It could be shaped in the form of various tools. The period when man used both copper and stone tools is called the **Chalcolithic age** or the copper-stone age. From the copper-stone age man moved into the **Bronze age** when the first civilisation came up. Bronze is an alloy (mixture) of copper and tin.

When people engaged in farming and herding, some people began to **produce surplus food**. This meant everybody did not have to be engaged in agriculture. Some people were free to make other things. This was the **beginning of craft**—especially pottery, spinning and weaving. Gradually metal craft was added to it. Surplus food and craft items could be **exchanged**. Types of food could also be exchanged. This gave rise to trade. Slowly and slowly trading and craft centres grew into towns and cities. This was the beginning of civilisation. Interestingly enough all settlements arose along the banks of rivers. Those were the earliest river valley civilisations. The Indus Valley Civilisation began at the banks of the river Indus and spread into the south Asia subcontinent. The Indus Valley Civilisation is also known as the Harappan Civilisation or Culture because Harappa is the name of the first site, related to it, excavated.

**Harappa** is an archaeological site in the North-West (in the present-day Pakistan). It seemed like a mound to the railway engineers 150 years ago. They used thousands of readymade high quality bricks from the walls of the buildings of the mound to build railway lines in Punjab. Then, in 1921, archaeologists found the



The Earliest Cities in the Subcontinent

site. Excavations at Harappa led to the discovery of a huge city lying buried under the debris of sand and bricks. They realised that this was one of the earliest (oldest) cities in the subcontinent. As Harappa was the first city to be discovered, all other sites (having similar buildings and other things) found later were called as **Harappan cities**. These cities developed about **4700 years ago**.

A similar big mound was found in 1922 in the Larkhana district of Sind. The excavations led to the discovery of the city. The mound was called as **Mohenjodaro** meaning 'mound of the dead' in Sindhi language.

Harappan cities were found in Punjab and Sind in Pakistan and in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab in India. A set of unique objects is found in almost all these cities : red pottery painted with designs in black, seals, stone weights, special beads, copper tools and long stone blades.

### Plan and Structure of the City



*A street in Mohenjodaro with a drain*

The Harappan cities had not grown from small towns and villages but were built according to a definite well thought out plan. Houses, drains and streets were planned and built at the same time.

Many of these cities were divided into two or more parts. The **western part of the city** was smaller but higher (30–50) feet above the ground). This is known as **citadel**. **Citadel** was a strong fort (= a small castle) built in the past as a place where people could go for safety if their city was attacked. The ruling class stayed in the citadel. All public buildings such as granaries (store houses) stood on it in Mohenjodaro, Harappa and Lothal. Another massive structure that was found was the **Town Hall**. It was made of twenty pillars of burnt bricks arranged in four rows of five each. Kalibangan and Lothal had **fire altars** for sacrifices.

In some cities, for example, in Mohenjodaro, a very special tank, now called the **Great Bath** was built in the citadel. This was lined with bricks, coated with plaster and made **water-tight** with a layer of natural tar. There were steps leading down to it from two sides, while there were rooms on all sides. **Water was brought in from a well manually** and drained out after use. **Important people** took a dip in this Bath on special ceremonies.



*The great bath*

Generally, **the part of the city to the east** was larger but lower. This was called the **lower town**. Very often walls of baked bricks were built around each part. The bricks were laid in an interlocking pattern to make the walls strong. The **roads** or **main streets** cut each other **at right angles** and divided the city into large blocks. Within each block there was a network of narrow lanes. The houses were built on both sides of the roads. The entrances to the houses opened into the side alley, not the main streets. Windows also did not face the streets. The main streets were 4 to 10 metres wide and 80 to 100 metres long.

Generally houses were either **one or two storeys** high, with rooms built around a **courtyard**. Though, of varying sizes, all had **flat roofs**. They

had many doors and windows, often in opposite direction, to ensure **better ventilation**. Most houses had a separate bathing area and some had **wells** to supply water. **Drains** in houses were connected to those on the streets and smaller drains led into bigger ones. Each drain had a gentle slope so that water could flow through it. The drains were laid out in straight lines. The drains were **covered** with **inspection holes** at intervals for cleaning them.

### People in the City

People of a Harappan city were always busy. There were different kinds of people. The presence of citadel and lower town suggests existence of social classes : the rulers, the priests, the learned men, the warriors, traders, craftsmen and labourers. The **rulers** planned the construction of special buildings in the city. They sent people to distant lands to get metal, precious stones, ornaments of gold and silver or beautiful beads, etc. The **scribes** knew how to write. They helped prepare the seals. They perhaps wrote on other materials which vanished with time. **Craftsmen**, men and women made different kinds of things from wood, stones, metals or clay in their homes or in special workshops. Many **terracotta toys** for children have been found. The **traders** were travelling to distant lands and returning with goods and raw materials and stories of their experiences. Some seals were used by merchants as a form of identification. Each merchant family had its own emblem (a particular animal and writing) on its **seal**. The fact that these seals also have been found in Mesopotamia indicates that products from the Indus Valley reached there. Traders travelled through land or river routes.



Terracotta toys



Script and animal on a Harappan seal

### Seals and Sealings

The impression of a seal on clay is called a **sealing**. After a bag containing goods was closed or tied, a layer of wet clay was applied on the knot and seal was pressed on it. Some kind of writing and emblem was engraved on the wet clay. The clay seals were allowed to dry before the goods were dispatched. If the buyer found the seal intact, he could be sure that the goods had been received without being tampered with.

The signs on a Harappan seal besides the animal figure, are part of a script. This is the earliest form of writing known in the subcontinent at that time. Scholars have not been able to decipher the various signs of the script till now.



Precisely shaped stone weights

### New Crafts in the Earliest cities

**Copper and bronze** were used to make tools, weapons, ornaments and vessels. **Gold and silver** were used to make ornaments and vessels. Both men and women were fond of jewellery. They wore heavy bangles, large necklaces and earrings. The Indus women also painted their lips and blackened their eyes with surma or kajal.



Beads (red)



Stone blades

**Stone weights** were made of chert, a kind of stone. These were used to weigh precious stones or precious metals. Many **beads** were cut out of carnelian, a beautiful red stone. Then they were shaped, polished and a hole was bored through the centre to pass a string through it. **Stone blades** were also made.

The Harappans also made **seals** out of stone. These are generally rectangular and have an animal carved on them. A humped bull, elephant or rhinoceros engraved on some seals indicates that these animals were considered important or sacred.

**Pottery making** was an important occupation. The wheel was used to shape terracotta pots, which were then baked, glazed and decorated with black designs, motifs of animals and geometric designs.



A stone statue of an important man wearing an embroidered garment

**Cotton** was probably grown at Mehrgarh from about 7,000 years ago. Actual pieces of cloth were found attached to the lid of a silver vase and some copper objects at Mohenjodaro. In a stone statue of an important man found from Mohenjodaro shows him wearing an embroidered garment. We can see how well the face is carved and how carefully the beard and embroidery is shown. It seems the work of a specialist or an expert craftsman. A **specialist** is a person who is trained to do only one kind of work, for example, cutting stone or carving seals or polishing beads. Both men and women were specialists in different crafts.

Archaeologists have also found spindle whorls, made of terracotta and faience. These were used to spin thread. **Faience** is a material artificially produced from sand or powdered quartz. It is made by first applying gum to finely grounded sand or powdered quartz. After drying it is glazed during which it also gives colour usually blue or sea green. It results in a shiny glassy surface. Most beads, bangles, earrings and tiny vessels were made of faience. These were in great demand.



A toy cart

### In Search of Raw Materials

Harappan traders used to go distant places to bring raw materials of various kinds. These raw materials were then processed to produce various types of finished goods. **Raw materials** are substances that are either found naturally, e.g. wood, ores or produced by farmers, e.g. cotton or herders, e.g. hides. Some raw materials were locally available while others like copper, tin, gold, silver and precious stones were brought from far off places. **Wheeled toy carts** and seals with figures of **boats** confirm this fact.



A seal with figure of boat

**Copper** was got from present-day Rajasthan and even from Oman in West Asia. **Tin** was brought from present-day Afghanistan and Iran. **Gold** came from present day Karnataka and **precious stones** from present day Gujarat, Iran and Afghanistan.

### Supply of Food to the Cities

Farmers and herders living in the nearby countryside supplied food



to the city people. Remains of plants indicate that the Harappans grew wheat, barley, pulses, peas, rice, sesame, linseed and mustard. Toy ploughs of stone have been found while the real ploughs made of wood do not survive today. The Harappans reared cattle, sheep, goat and buffalo. Water and pastures were available around settlements. They also collected fruits like **ber**, caught fish and hunted animals like antelope.

This region in north-west does not receive heavy rainfall. So, water was stored and the fields were irrigated when the plants were growing. In the dry summer months the herders moved greater distances in search of grass and water.

### **Case Study : Harappan Towns in Gujarat**

**The city of Dholavira** was located on Khadir Beyt in Rann of Kutch. It was an area with fertile soil and fresh water. Instead of two parts as in other Harappan cities, it had three parts. There were massive stone walls, with entrances through gateways, that enclosed each part of the city. Inside, there were settlements, with an open area where public ceremonies were held. A unique find is the large letters of the Harappan script that were carved out of white stone and inlaid in wood. This is unique because generally Harappan writing has been found on small objects such as seals.

**The city of Lothal** was located beside a tributary of Sabarmati river close to the Gulf of Khambhat in Gujarat. It was the port city. It had a dockyard, where boats and ships came in from the sea and through the river channel. Dockyard is a place where goods are loaded on and unloaded from ships. Lothal was an important crafts centre where objects out of stone, shell and metal were made. Raw materials such as semiprecious stones were available nearby. Seals and sealings were used in big business deals. A number of seals and sealings are found inside a store house. A workshop for making beads has been found here.




*A huge tank at Lothal which was a dockyard*

### **The Mystery of the End**

The Indus Valley or Harappan Civilisation lasted for nearly 800 years. Around 3900 years ago people stopped living in many of the cities. Writing seals and weights were no longer used. Raw materials brought from long distances became rare. Sites in Sind and West Punjab (present day Pakistan) were abandoned. Many people moved into newer, smaller settlements to the east and the south.

Scholars suggest different reasons for the above : deforestation for baking bricks and smelting of copper ore, over-grazing by large herds of cattle, flooding or a river drying up. But none of the reasons can explain the **end of all the cities** in different regions of the subcontinent. It appears as if the rulers lost control. A large scale burning down of some settlements or a massacre by foreign invaders is also indicated.



However the people of later periods who emerged some 1400 years later, also inherited cotton cloths, pottery, art of carving and certain other beliefs and customs from the Harappan people. New cities emerged about 1400 years later, i.e., 2500 years ago.

#### In other Parts of the World

Find Egypt in your atlas in north Africa. Most of Egypt is a dry desert, except for the lands along the river Nile. Around 5000 years ago, kings ruled over Egypt. These kings sent armies to distant lands to get gold, silver, ivory, timber and precious stones. They also built huge tombs known as pyramids. The dead bodies of the kings and queens were preserved and buried in these pyramids. These carefully preserved bodies in pyramids are known as '**mummies**'.

A **pyramid** is a large stone building with four triangular walls that slope into a point at the top. The step-pyramid is the oldest, built 4600 years ago. To make it the masons cut the huge rock into blocks. The three pyramids at Gizza are built with improved techniques. The Great Pyramid, built for the king 'Khufu', stands 144 metres high. The pyramids are, however more elaborate and different from megaliths found in Mehrgarh and South India. Like in the case of megaliths, objects belonging to the dead, were buried with it in the pyramids : food and drink, utensils, clothes, ornaments, weapons, musical instruments and animals.



#### Key Words

- » City : a large town.
- » Citadel : smaller but higher part of a city, a strong fort built in the past as a place where people go for safety if their city was attacked.
- » Scribe : who knows how to write.
- » Seal : an engraved piece of stone or metal used as a stamp for identification.
- » Specialist : a person who is trained to do only one kind of work.
- » Raw material : substances that are found naturally or produced by farmers and herders.
- » Pyramid : a large stone building with four triangular walls that slope into a point at the top.

#### Time Line

- ◆ Cotton cultivation at Mehrgarh (about 7000 years ago)
- ◆ Beginning of cities (about 4700 years ago)
- ◆ Beginning of the end of these cities (about 3900 years ago)
- ◆ The emergence of other cities (about 2500 years ago)

#### SUMMARY

- ▶ Surplus food enabled some people free to become craftsmen.
- ▶ Harappan cities developed about 4700 years ago. All of them have similar buildings and other things.
- ▶ Harappan cities usually were divided into two parts : citadel and lower town.
- ▶ The main streets cut each other at right angles with a network of narrow lanes.

- ▶ Granaries, town hall, great bath and fire altars are found in the citadels.
- ▶ Network of covered drains, with gentle slopes are found.
- ▶ Several social classes existed in these cities – rulers, priests, learned men, warriors, traders, craftsmen, labourers.
- ▶ Craftspersons made tools, weapons, ornaments, vessels, stone weights, pottery, cloth and seals.
- ▶ Farmers and herders supplied food to the cities.
- ▶ The cities were probably destroyed by foreign invaders.

## Exercise Time

### A. Tick (✓) the only correct choice amongst the following :

1. Bronze is an alloy of :
 

a. copper and zinc	b. copper and tin	c. copper and gold	d. copper and silver
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2. Harappan cities developed about :
 

a. 2500 years ago	b. 3900 years ago	c. 4700 years ago	d. 5000 years ago
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3. It is a material artificially produced from sand or powdered quartz :
 

a. Faience	b. Terracota	c. Pottery	d. Bead
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4. A dockyard has been found at the Harappan city of :
 

a. Mohenjodaro	b. Lothal	c. Harappa	d. Kalibangan
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### B. Fill in the blanks :

1. The beginning of cities was about \_\_\_\_\_ years ago.
2. Another name for Harappan civilisation is \_\_\_\_\_ civilisation.
3. The part of the Harappan city to the west was called the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Each merchant family had its own emblem on its \_\_\_\_\_.

### C. Match the following :

- |                    |                |
|--------------------|----------------|
| 1. Precious stones | a. Karnataka   |
| 2. Gold            | b. Afghanistan |
| 3. Tin             | c. Rajasthan   |
| 4. Copper          | d. Gujarat     |

### D. Write true (T) or False (F) against the following statements in given brackets :

1. The city of Mohenjodaro was older than Harappa.
2. The pyramids are tombs of kings and queens who ruled Egypt.
3. The Harappan cities were not well planned.
4. Copper and bronze were used for making tools and weapons.


### E. Answer in one word or one phrase :

1. When did Harappan culture flourish ?
2. What were stored in the granaries of Indus Valley cities ?
3. What is another name for Chalcolithic age ?
4. In how many parts the city of Dholavira was divided ?
5. At which Harappan city a dockyard is found ?



**F. Answer these questions briefly :**

1. Why is the Indus Valley Civilisation also called the Harappan culture ?
2. How did we come to know about the Harappan civilisation ?
3. State three distinctive features of the Harappan culture .
4. State the social organisation of the people of the Harappan civilisation.
5. Give the chief cause of the end of the Harappan civilisation.

**G. Answer these questions in detail :**

1. Why were metals, writing, wheel and plough important for the Harappans ?
2. How was the life of farmers and herders that supplied food to the Harappan cities was different from that of the farmers and herders of the earliest villages ?
3. Give an account of the crafts and trade of the Harappan people.
4. Describe the features of town planning of the Harappan cities.

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**PROJECT WORK**

1. Make a list of the things what the Harappans ate, and a list of what you eat today. Put a tick mark against the similar things.
2. Describe three important buildings in your city, town or village. In which part of the settlement are they located ? What are the activities that take place in these buildings ?