

Cities in the Indus Valley

▼ **KEY QUESTION** Why was the earliest Indian civilization located near the Indus River?

Huge earth mounds dot the Indus Valley. Near them, people found burnt bricks and tiny stone seals covered with a mysterious writing. These finds led to further exploration of the mounds. Archaeologists uncovered the ruins of an ancient civilization.

Early Inhabitants History in the Indus River valley followed the same pattern as in Sumer and Egypt. As in other regions, civilization along the Indus River began with agriculture. The earliest farmers raised wheat and barley. By 3000 B.C., they were growing cotton and making it into fabric—the first people in Asia to do so. They domesticated cattle, sheep, goats, and chickens. They also learned how to make copper and bronze tools.

People in the villages traded with one another. Over time, the Indus Valley people began to trade with people from farther away. The wealth they gained from trade helped them to develop a more complex culture.

Great Cities By 2500 B.C., some villages had grown to be great cities. The Indus and Saraswati valleys contained hundreds of cities. At least 35,000 people may have lived in the largest and best-known cities, Mohenjo-Daro (moh•HEHN•joh•DAHR•oh) and Harappa (huh•RAP•uh). Harappa gave its name to the entire culture. Today the ancient culture that developed along the Indus River is called **Harappan civilization**.

This civilization featured **planned cities**, which were cities built according to a design. Architects surrounded these cities with heavy brick protective walls. City streets crossed each other in a neat grid with square corners. Along the streets were homes, shops, and factories. The cities also had large public buildings that may have been used for religious or government functions.

Harappa itself is a good example of this city planning. The city was partially built on mud-brick platforms to protect it from flooding. A thick brick wall about three and a half miles long surrounded it. Inside was a citadel that provided protection for the royal family and also served as a temple. The streets in its grid system were as wide as 30 feet. Walls divided districts from each other. Houses varied in size. Narrow lanes separated rows of houses that were laid out in blocks.



▲ **Indus Valley Seal**

This seal clearly shows an elephant, but scholars don't know why. No one has figured out how to read the pictographs above the animal.

Dealing with Problems People in large cities always have to deal with the problem of removing human waste. In most ancient cities, people retrieved water from a river or a central well. They dumped waste into open drainage ditches or carted it out of town. By contrast, Harappan cities were very advanced in that area. Almost every house contained a bathroom and a toilet. Underground sewers carried away the waste. No other civilization achieved this level of convenience until the 1800s.

It takes much careful planning and organization to build such complex cities. Because of that, historians believe the ancient Harappans must have had powerful leaders. We do not know if priests or kings or a combination of both ruled the Harappans, but their government must have been strong.

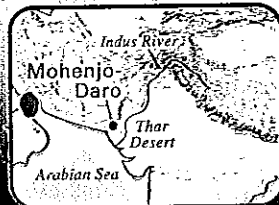
▲ **FIND MAIN IDEAS** Explain why Indian civilization developed along the Indus River.

Harappan Culture

▼ **KEY QUESTION** What were the cultural features of Harappan civilization?

A mysterious form of writing covered the stone seals that people found in the ruined cities. Some of those seals may have indicated types of trade goods.

Indus Valley Cities



Citadel Walls

Citadels, or fortresses, were part of most Indus Valley cities. ▶

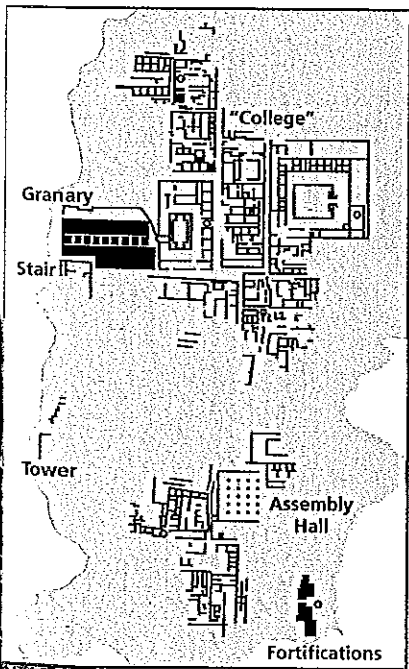


Some scholars think that the 500 pictographs, or picture signs, of Harappan writing may stand for words, sounds, or both. But they don't really know. No one has yet figured out how to read the writing of the Harappan civilization. Until someone does, the only way we can learn about the civilization is by studying artifacts.

Harappan Religion Archaeologists have not identified the site of any temples for specific deities, or gods, but they have found evidence of religion. Mohenjo-Daro had a huge public bath that may have been used for religious rituals. Archaeologists have found figures of animals, such as bulls, that Indians still regard as holy. They also found clay figurines that may be deities or simply dolls.

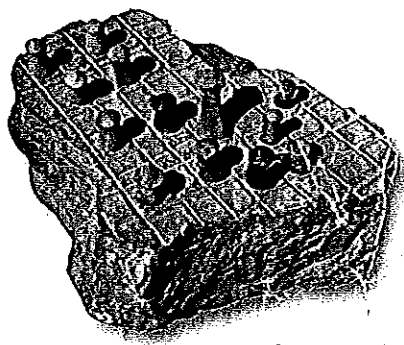
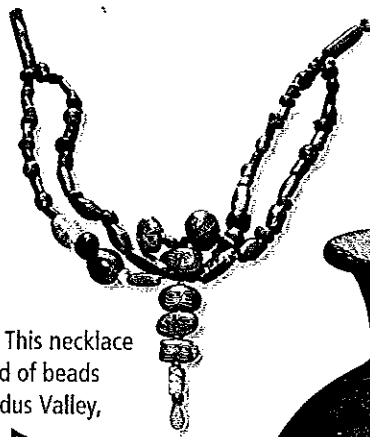
Priests likely prayed for good harvests and safety from floods. Religious objects show links to modern Hindu culture. Figures show what look like early likenesses of Shiva, a major Hindu deity. Other figures relate to a mother deity and the worship of a bull. All of these became part of later Indian civilization.

A Widespread and Prosperous Culture People across a wide region shared Harappan culture. Harappan cities spread across an area that was about 500,000 square miles in size. That region was nearly twice as big as Texas is today. Even so, these cities shared a common design. Those shared designs show how widely the culture had spread.

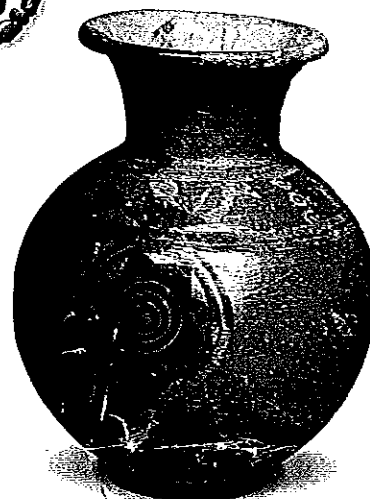


◀ **City Map** A map of the citadel portion of Mohenjo-Daro shows an organized pattern of buildings and streets.

Necklace This necklace is composed of beads from the Indus Valley, c. 2500 B.C. ▶



▲ **Board Game** This game was played in Indus Valley cities.



▲ **Pot** This pot was found in the cemetery in the city of Harappa.

◀ **Mohenjo-Daro** The city streets were at right angles and the walls were well built.

Culture and Trade Harappan people used standard weights and measures. Across the region, they made similar bronze statues and clay toys. These artifacts show that the Harappans could afford to have more than just basic necessities.

The Harappans gained their wealth from agriculture and trade. Archaeologists have found seals from the Indus Valley as far away as Mesopotamia. These stamps and seals made of carved stone were probably used by the Indus merchants to identify their goods. The Harappans traded timber, ivory, and beads. Mesopotamians sold the Harappans silver, tin, and woolen cloth. Trade began as early as the reign of Sargon of Akkad, around 2370 B.C., and continued for many years.

▲ **SUMMARIZE** Describe features of Harappan civilization.

Indus Valley Culture Ends

▼ **KEY QUESTION** Why did Indus Valley civilization decline?

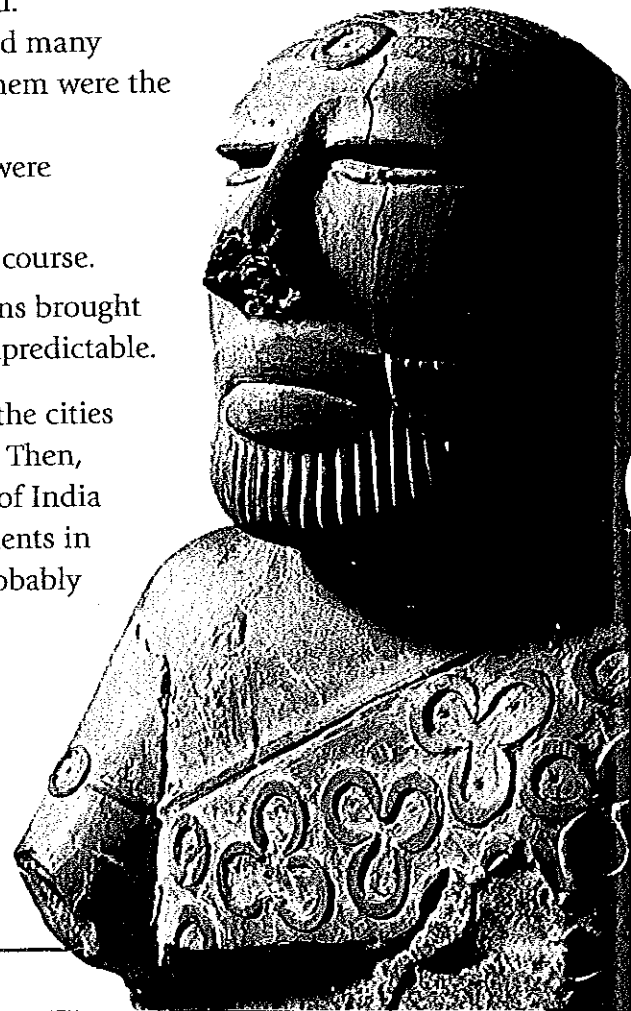
Around 1700 B.C., the quality of buildings in the Indus Valley cities declined. Gradually, the great cities fell into decay. What happened? Some historians think the Indus River changed course so that floods no longer fertilized the fields near the cities. Other scholars suggest that people wore out the valley's land.

The Indus Valley civilization faced many environmental challenges. Among them were the following factors:

- Yearly floods along the Indus were unpredictable.
- The rivers sometimes changed course.
- The cycle of wet and dry seasons brought by the monsoon winds was unpredictable.

A Mystery Solved? The fate of the cities remained a mystery until the 1970s. Then, satellite images of the subcontinent of India revealed evidence of ancient movements in the earth's crust. This movement probably caused earthquakes and floods. The movement also probably altered the course of the Indus River.

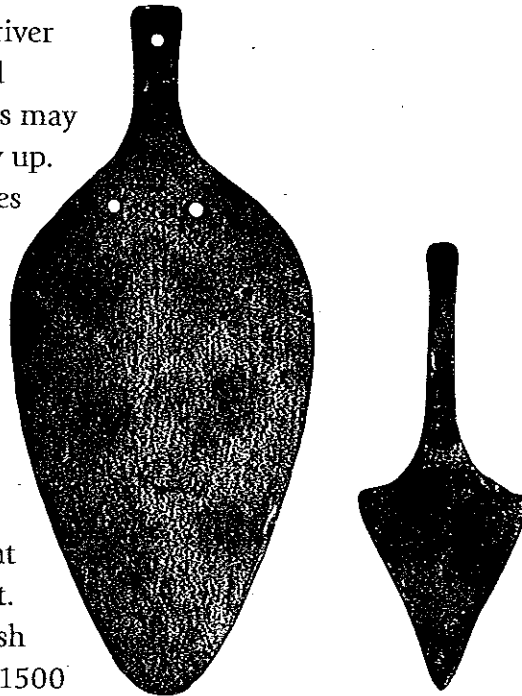
Priest King Scholars believe this sculpture is of a priest or king from the ancient city of Mohenjo-Daro. ►



Impact of Disaster Some cities along the river apparently suffered through these disasters and survived. Other cities were destroyed. The shifts may have caused another river, the Saraswati, to dry up. Trade on this river became impossible, and cities began to die.

Harappan agriculture, also, would have been influenced by these events. It is likely that these changes prevented production of large quantities of food. This too may have forced people to leave the cities in order to ensure their survival.


Influence of Nomads Another factor might have had an impact on the Indian subcontinent. A nomadic people from north of the Hindu Kush mountains swept into the Indus Valley around 1500 B.C. Indian civilization would grow again under the influence of these nomads, as you will learn in Section 2.



▲ **Copper Tools**
Farmers used these tools for tasks such as weeding and leveling soil.

▲ **ANALYZE CAUSES** Explain why Indus Valley civilization declined.

1 Section Assessment

 **ONLINE QUIZ**
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Terms & Names

1. Explain the importance of

subcontinent Himalayas Harappan civilization
Hindu Kush monsoons planned cities

Use Your Reading Notes

2. Make Generalizations

Use your completed chart to answer the following question:

What are advantages and disadvantages of having monsoons?

Geography and Indian Life	
Physical Geography of India	
Cities in the Indus Valley	
Harappan Culture	

Key Ideas

3. What evidence showed archaeologists that an ancient civilization had existed in the Indus Valley?
4. What economic activities allowed Harappan civilization to begin along the Indus and Saraswati rivers?
5. What evidence suggested that Harappan civilization was prosperous?

Critical Thinking

6. **Formulate Historical Questions** What questions do you still have about Harappan culture?
7. **Analyze Causes and Effects** What are two effects of India's great rivers?

Activity **Do a Dig** Find a toy, tool, or object in your house or classroom. Study it and describe it as if you were an archaeologist. List five things that it tells you about its owner.

Section
2

Reading for Understanding

▶ Key Ideas

BEFORE, YOU LEARNED

The earliest Indian civilization developed near the Indus River and produced writing, a prosperous way of life, and a widely shared culture.

NOW YOU WILL LEARN

A group of nomadic people moved into India and developed a system of social classes and a belief system that developed into Hinduism.

▶ Vocabulary

TERMS & NAMES

Aryans (AIR•ee•uhnz) group of Indo-Europeans who are believed to have migrated to the Indian subcontinent

caste social class a person belongs to by birth

Brahmanism early religion of the Aryans

Hinduism modern name for the major religion of India, which developed from Brahmanism

reincarnation rebirth of a soul in another body

karma in Hinduism, the consequences of a person's actions in this life, which determine his or her fate in the next life

BACKGROUND VOCABULARY

dialects varieties of a language spoken in different regions or countries

REVIEW

migration process of relocating to a new region

▶ Reading Strategy

Re-create the chart shown at right. As you read and respond to the **KEY QUESTIONS**, use the chart to summarize ideas about the origins of Hinduism.



See Skillbuilder Handbook, page R4.

SUMMARIZE

The Origins of Hinduism

The Aryans migrated ...

Aryan culture changed India by ...

The main characteristics of Hinduism are ...



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