

The Indus Valley Civilization

3



Lesson Focus

- Origin
- Social life-family, community
- Town Planning
- Occupations
- Trade
- Art and Architecture
- Religious Beliefs
- Decline

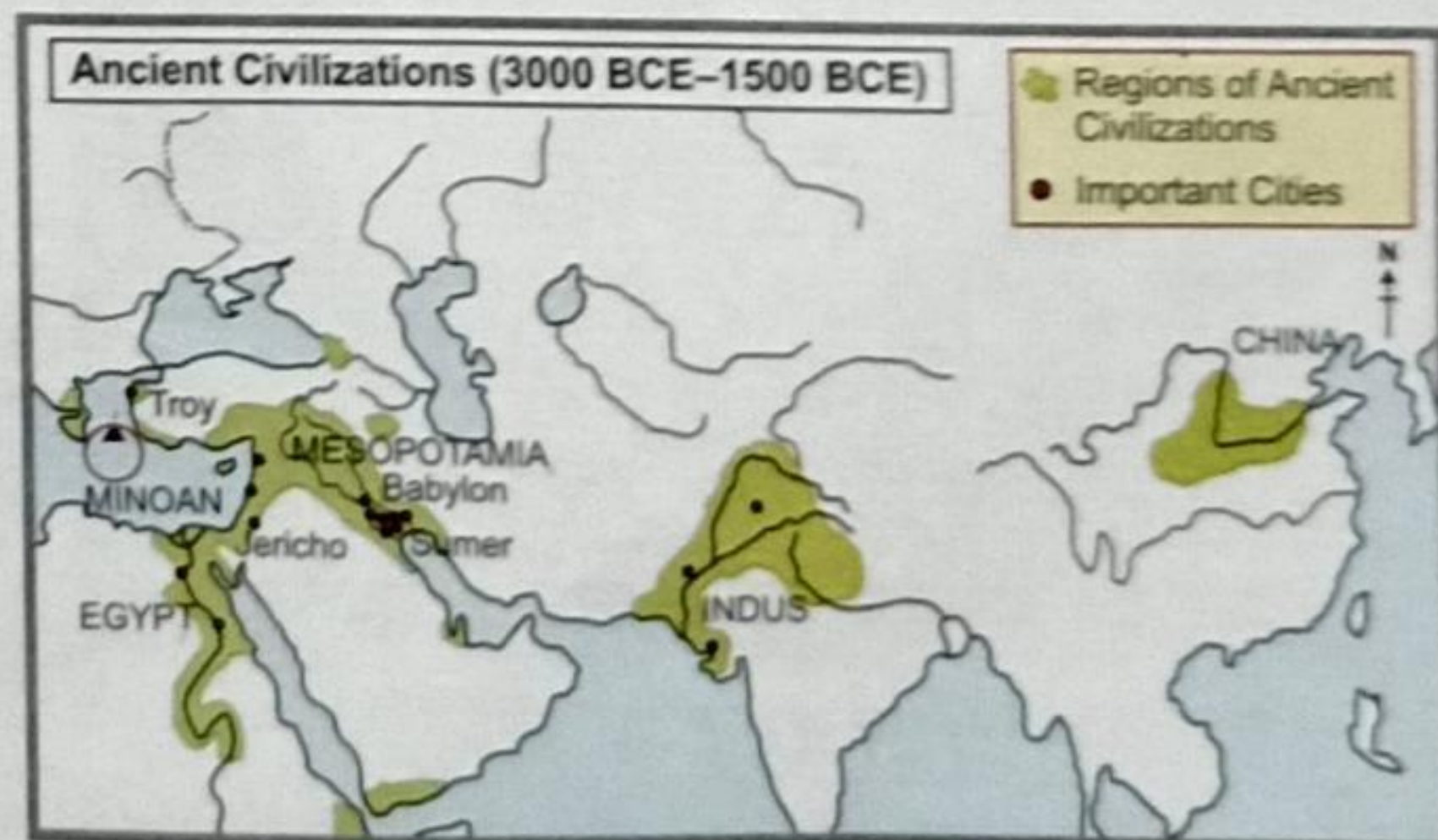
The word 'civilization' means an organized culture of many communities or a people or of a nation. It is to raise people from a primitive state to an advanced and ordered stage of development in politics, society and culture. Civilization is commonly used to mean people who are not savages or barbarians but possess refinement and culture and have a high level of cultural and technological development. The villages of the Neolithic age grew into towns and cities around rivers between 4000 BCE and 600 BCE. This is the period when the first civilizations came into existence in the world.

The first civilizations or ancient civilizations are called **River Valley civilizations** because they grew near river banks where it was conducive for agriculture. Rivers served as a constant source of water for agriculture and the soil on their banks was highly fertile due to recurrent floods. Besides, the rivers were an easy mode of travel by boats and rafts. Another important feature of the River Valley civilizations was that they

invented and used bronze metal alloy for making tools and implements, hence these civilizations are also called **Bronze civilizations**.

The early River Valley civilizations were:

- The Egyptian civilization in the valley of the Nile river
- The Mesopotamian civilization in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers
- The Indus Valley or Harappan civilization on the banks of the Indus river and its tributaries
- The Chinese civilization in the valleys of the Yangtze river and the Hwang-Ho river or the Yellow river



The regions of ancient civilizations

alloy: a substance that is a mixture of two or more metals

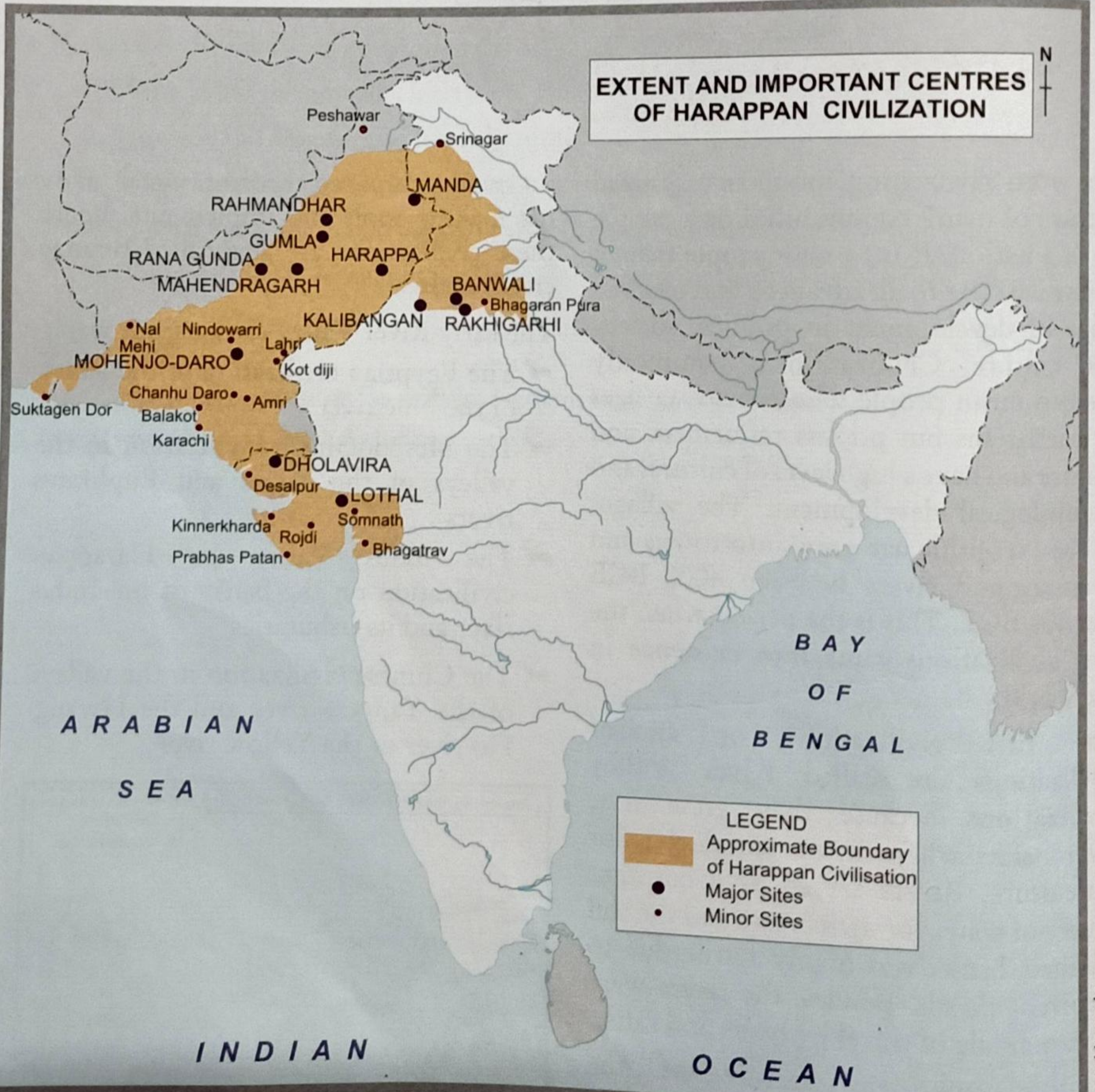
INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

European countries are often cited as examples of social and economic development and good urban planning. But can you imagine that about 4500 years ago, people were living in well-planned cities and buildings in the **Indus Valley civilization** in the Indian subcontinent? This civilization flourished between 3300

BCE and 1800 BCE on the banks of the Indus river and its tributaries. It had advanced urban culture and its social and economic systems were well-developed.

Geographical Footprint

The Indus Valley civilization was given its name after the first discovery of its main cities on the banks of the Indus river. So far, about 250 such sites have been



Extent and important centres of Harappan civilization

Map not to scale

discovered in present-day Pakistan and parts of northern and western India.

The Indus Valley civilization was the largest among the four ancient civilizations. Two main Indus cities—**Harappa** and **Mohenjo-daro**—were unearthed in the early 1920s in present day Pakistan. The Indus Valley civilization is also known as the **Harappan civilization** as Harappa was the first city to be unearthed.

Daya Ram Sahni and Rakhaldas Bandyopadhyay, both working with the Archaeological Survey of India in the early 1920s, played a leading role in the discovery of the two main cities. Some of the discovered Harappan sites are: Shortugai (Afghanistan), Manda (near Jammu), Ropar (Punjab), Banawali and Rakhigarhi (Haryana), Alamgirpur (Uttar Pradesh), Kalibangan (Rajasthan), and Amri, Chanhudaro and Kot Dijian (Pakistan). Coastal settlements of the Indus Valley civilization extended from Sutkagan Dor in western Balochistan to Lothal in Gujarat.

Well-planned Cities

The advanced architecture of the Harappans is seen in their impressive dockyards, granaries, large baths, flat-roofed brick houses, warehouses and protective walls. But, no large monumental structures were found in the Indus cities.

The well-planned cities were laid out in a grid-like formation. They had broad roads and streets. The roads ran parallel to each other and cut at right angles. They were rounded at the corners for easy turning of carts. Different types of houses lined both sides of the streets.

grid-like: a design in which straight lines cross each other to form squares

citadel: fort on high ground in a city where people could go in case of an attack

Know This

The Sindhi word Mohenjo-daro means 'mound of the dead'. It is a combination of three Sindhi words—*moan* or *moen* meaning 'dead', *jo* meaning 'of' and *daro* meaning 'tomb'. The Mohenjo-daro ruins lie in Larkana district of the Sindh province of Pakistan.

Citadel: The cities were divided into two parts: the upper part in the west was a fortress-type area called the **citadel** and the lower part in the east was called the **lower city**. The lower city surrounded the citadel. The citadel was built on a raised platform of mud and bricks. Public buildings, granaries, baths and quarters for important persons were built within the citadel. A wall surrounded the citadel and contained notches from which people could look out and defend the area. In Mohenjo-daro, craft workshops have also been unearthed in both the citadel and the lower city.

The Great Bath: The citadel in Mohenjo-daro had a large rectangular tank called the **Great Bath**. The tank with six entrances resembled a large swimming pool. It had



A corridor of the citadel at Dholavira



Know This

The Harappan city of Dholavira was in the form of a parallelogram surrounded by a protective wall.

two flights of steps to reach the bottom. The tank was supplied with fresh water from an adjacent well. It was probably a public bath used by the people for ritual bathing on special occasions or for religious ceremonies.

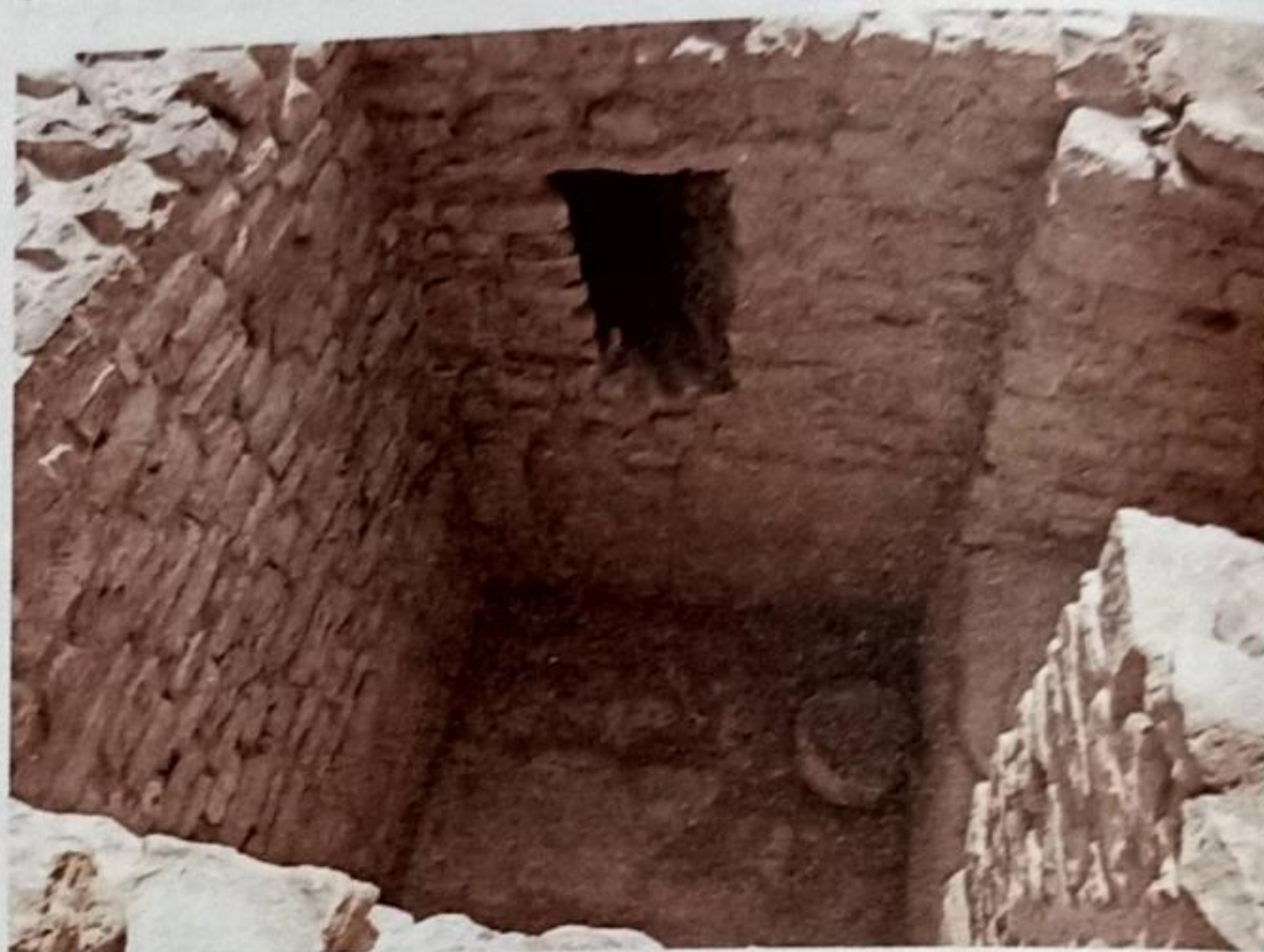


The Great Bath found at Mohenjo-daro

Granary: Large granaries have been excavated at Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, Lothal and Kalibangan. These granaries were used to store surplus grain. The granaries were built in the citadel. The granary, excavated at Harappa, is called the **Great Granary**. It had two rows and each row had six small granaries. The granaries were built near the rivers for easy transportation of grain.

Lower City and Houses: The lower city consisted of houses of the common people. Their flat-roofed houses were one or two-storey high. A staircase led to the upper storeys. The house walls were made of baked bricks of uniform size, wood and stone. Most houses had a kitchen, a

courtyard, a bathroom and a well. Houses opened only to inner courtyards and small lanes.



The bathing area of a dwelling place in Dholavira

Sanitation and Drainage: The drainage system built by Harappans was highly advanced. Their houses either had individual wells or they obtained water from public wells. The Harappan houses had separate rooms with sloping floors for bathing and washing. Waste water from these rooms was directed to covered drains, which lined the major streets. The drains, made of brick slabs, had manholes.



A part of the drainage system at Lothal

SOCIAL LIFE

Social Division

In the Indus Valley civilization, the society was divided into four classes. The

following table shows the Harappan social division based on archaeological evidence.

Social Division in the Indus Valley civilization

S. No.	Class of People	Archaeological Evidence
1.	The learned people	The bust of a priest
2.	The warriors	Remains of swords, fort walls
3.	The traders and artisans	Artefacts
4.	The farmers and labourers	Quarters of labourers

Administration

It is still unknown if the Harappan civilization followed any system of governance. No evidence of kings or rulers has been found in the Harappan culture. Some historians believe that the Harappan cities were governed by committees. These committees had rich merchants and priests as members.



Mother Goddess

Religion

No temples have been discovered from the Harappan sites. However, the excavated clay seals and figurines suggest that the Harappans worshipped a Mother Goddess as a symbol of fertility. The seal of a male god seated in a *yogic* posture

amulet: lucky charm or good luck charm

Recap

1. The first civilizations or the River Valley civilizations came into existence in the world between 4000 BCE and 600 BCE on the river banks.
2. These civilizations were: (a) Egyptian civilization (b) Mesopotamian civilization (c) Indus Valley or Harappan civilization (d) Chinese civilization.
3. The Indus Valley civilization or the Harappan civilization flourished on the banks of the Indus river. It covered most of present-day Pakistan and parts of India.
4. The Harappans lived in highly developed cities which had public buildings, granaries, baths, water tanks and covered drains.

surrounded by animals is believed to be that of Lord Pashupati (the Lord of Cattle). The excavated amulets suggest that the Harappans believed in ghosts and evil spirits. They also worshipped forces of nature, the *peepal* tree and animals like the humped bull.

The Harappans believed in life after death as a number of items like jewellery and tools have been excavated from the graves. Many urns containing human bones and ashes have also been excavated.

Food and Dress

Barley and wheat were the main food crops. People also reared animals like buffaloes, sheep, pigs and hens for meat and eggs. The study of Harappan seals shows that the Indus Valley people wore a shawl-like dress as upper garment and a *dhoti*-like dress for lower garment. Women wore skirts. Their clothes were made up of cotton and wool. The discovery of clay

spindles shows that the women used to spin yarn.

Personal Grooming

Both men and women in the Indus Valley were interested in personal grooming. They wore ornaments like bangles, ear-rings and girdles made of shells, beads and metals like copper, silver and gold. Razors, mirrors and ivory combs of that period have also been excavated.



The statue of 'Priest King', found at Mohenjo-daro



A necklace and beads of the Harappan era

Recreation

For entertainment, the Harappans seemed to have turned to dance and music. A number of gold, **terracotta** and stone figurines of dancing girls reveal their love for dancing. A harp-like instrument depicted on an Indus seal and two shell objects found at Lothal indicate the use of stringed musical instruments. The Harappans also played dice and marble games. The craftsmen made clay and terracotta toys like the bird-shaped whistles and carts,

harp: a large musical instrument with strings stretched on a vertical frame

puppets with moveable heads, rattles and dolls.

ECONOMIC LIFE

Agriculture

The Harappans primarily depended on agriculture for their livelihood because they lived in the highly fertile land of the Indus Valley. They grew crops like wheat, barley, cotton, millets and sesame.



A clay toy found at Mohenjo-daro

The Harappans also domesticated animals such as camels, sheep, buffaloes and goats. Many of the Harappan seals have pictures of animals like tiger, elephant and rhinoceros.

Trade and Transport

The Harappans had trade contacts with Mesopotamia, Persia and Afghanistan. This is clear from the discovery of seals of foreign countries in the Indus Valley and vice-versa. The Harappan merchants used to stamp their goods with seals.

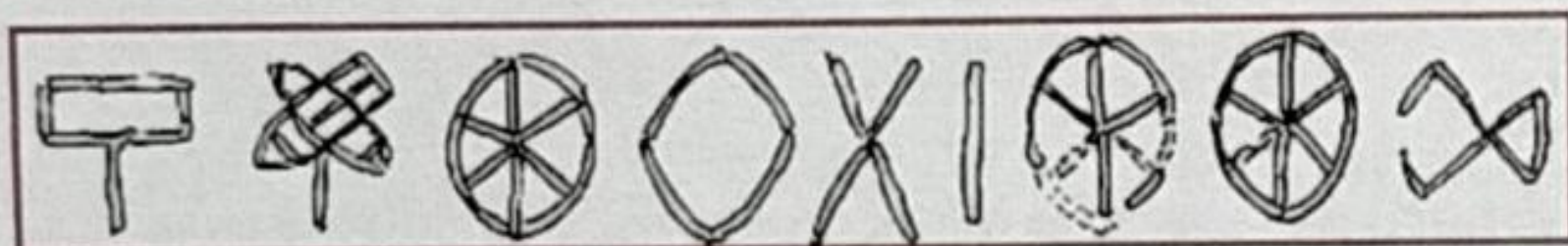
The Indus people carried foreign trade through the dock at Lothal. Today, Lothal is located in Ahmedabad district of Gujarat. It was a thriving trade centre, with its exports of beads, gems and valuable ornaments reaching West Asia and Africa. The exports also included copper, ivory and cotton textiles. The imports included blue gems and silver from Afghanistan. One noteworthy feature of this trade was that the Indus people used a

system of uniform weights and measures. For trade and transport, they used bullock carts and boats.

ART AND CRAFT

Script

The Harappans used to write in a **pictographic script** that has been found on their seals. In pictographic script, pictures or symbols are used to express ideas or concepts. Nobody till date has been able to understand their pictographic script. Some experts say that the Harappan script has about 400 basic signs.



Some pictorial characters of the Harappan script

Craftsmanship

The Harappans developed new techniques to produce copper, bronze, lead and tin. They were also good craftsmen who made



The dancing girl statuette found at Mohenjo-daro

bronze and copper utensils and weapons like axes, knives and spears. The statuette of the dancing girl, excavated at Mohenjo-daro, is a masterpiece in bronze casting. Seal making was another important craft of the Indus valley civilization. More than 2,000 seals have been found.

Most of them are square or rectangular in shape. They were made of soap stone or steatite. The Pashupati, humped Brahmini bull are some of the important seals.



Harappan seals depicting animals

DECLINE OF INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

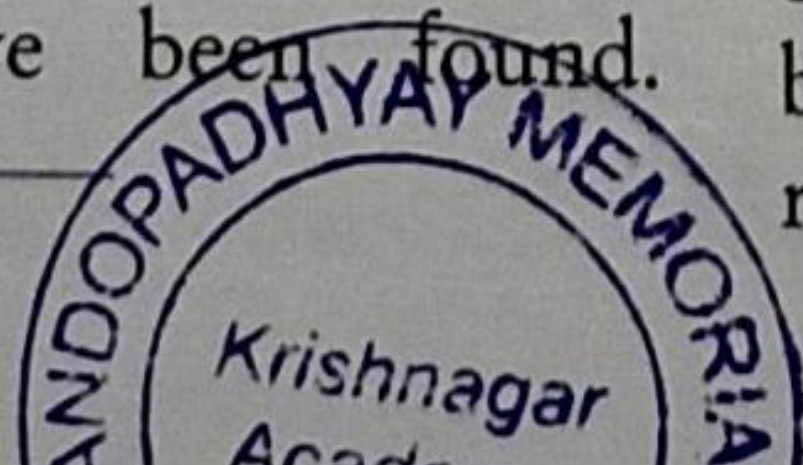
The Indus Valley civilization vanished suddenly around 1500 BCE. The causes that actually led to the decline are not known. However, historians believe that the decline may be due to the following reasons.

- 🦌 Climate changes might have rendered the land unsuitable for agriculture in the Indus Valley.
- 🦌 The Indus river might have changed its course.
- 🦌 Increase in population or decline in agriculture might have created economic problems.
- 🦌 Frequent floods might have destroyed the Harappan cities.
- 🦌 Epidemics might have taken a toll on the lives of the people.
- 🦌 Invasion by an enemy could not be thwarted.

Though the Harappans left no monumental structures, their achievements in town planning, community living, manufacture of bronze products and science were remarkable.

statuette/figurine: a small statue

History & Civics—6



KRISHNAGAR ACADEMY.

CLASS - VI, SUBJECT - HISTORY

CHAPTER - THE INDUS VALLEY

16.06.2020 CIVILIZATION.

TOPIC - EXERCISE QUESTIONS.

Answer the following Questions

1. Name the four ancient civilizations.

Ans: The four ancient civilizations are as follows:

(i) The Egyptian Civilization.

(ii) The Mesopotamian Civilization.

(iii) The Indus Valley or Harappan Civilization.

(iv) The Chinese Civilization.

2. Mention any five sites from where the remains of the Harappan Civilization have been excavated.

Ans: Any five sites from where the remains of the Harappan Civilization have been excavated are:

- (i) Shortugai (Afghanistan)
- (ii) Mand'ā (near Jammu)
- (iii) Ropar (Punjab)
- (iv) Alamgirpur (Uttar Pradesh)
- (v) Kalibangan (Rajasthan)

3. Describe the social classes of the Harappans.

Ans: The society was divided into four classes:

1. The learned people
2. The warriors
3. The traders and artisans
4. The farmers and labourers

4. Which were the two main parts of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro cities?

Ans: The cities were divided into two parts:

The upper part in the west was a fortress-type area called the Citadel and the lower part in the east was called the lower city.

5. Describe the sanitation arrangement of Harappan houses.

Ans: The drainage system built by Harappans was highly advanced. Their houses either had individual wells or they obtained water from public wells. The Harappan houses had separate rooms with sloping floors for bathing and washing. Waste water from these rooms was directed

to covered drains, which lined the major streets. The drains, made of brick slabs, had manholes.

Let me share the answers to the Questions published on 13.06.20 (Saturday)

Answers.

1. In pictographic script, pictures or symbols are used to express ideas or concepts. The Harappans used to write in a pictographic script that has been found on their seals.
2. The Statuette of the dancing girl.
3. Seal making was another important craft of the Indus valley civilization. More than 2,000 seals have been found. Most of them are square or rectangular in shape. They were made of soap stone or steatite.
4. Any two reasons behind the decline of Indus valley civilization are
 - (i) The Indus river might have changed its course.
 - (ii) Epidemics might have taken a toll on the lives of the people.
5. 400.

EXERCISE

Fill in the blanks!

- A
1. 3300 BCE to 1800 BCE.
 2. Harappa and Mohenjodaro.
 3. Citadel.
 4. Agriculture.
 5. Mesopotamia, Persia and Afghanistan.

B Match the following!

1. Egyptian Civilization (c) Nile river.
2. Mesopotamian Civilization (d) Tigris and Euphrates rivers.
3. Harappan Civilization (b) Indus river.
4. Chinese Civilization (a) Huang-Ho river.

C TRUE/FALSE

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. True.

In the next class on 20.6.2020 (Saturday) we shall complete the chapter by discussing five more Questions of the exercise.