UNIT 6 HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION-II*

Structure

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6.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we will study the Mature Harappan phase, its meaning, its chief characteristics and the main sites associated with it. After studying this unit, you will be able to learn about the:

- Mature Harappan phase and how it is different from the Early Harappan phase;
- main sites, their architectural features, town planning, drainage;
- Indus script and problems in its decipherment; and
- society, crafts, trade, religion and economy of the Indus civilization.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The sites associated with this civilization are found in large parts of Pakistan and north-west India, with one site located in Afghanistan. The total number of sites discovered till 2008 were 1022, out of which 616 are in India and 414 in Pakistan. The area covered by the civilization is estimated to be between 680,000 and

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800,000 sq. kms. This makes it the largest civilization in the ancient world, covering almost 12 times the combined area of Egypt and Mesopotamia. We know that the roots of the civilization lie in the Early Harappan cultures, which you have already studied in detail in the previous unit. What you need to understand is that Mature Harappan, despite sharing many characteristics with the Early Harappan phase, is significantly different. Instead of several different cultures in the Mature Phase, we see the existence of one uniform civilization spread across this huge area. One can argue that such standardization and uniformity over such a vast area is completely unparalleled in the ancient world.

The name 'Harappan' or 'Indus civilization' refers to the urban, literate culture of the 3rd and early 2nd millennium BCE. In the initial years of its discovery, many archaeologists attempted to compare this civilization with the Mesopotamian civilization. Off late, archaeologists have become aware that the Indus civilization needs to be studied independently rather than through a Mesopotamian lens.

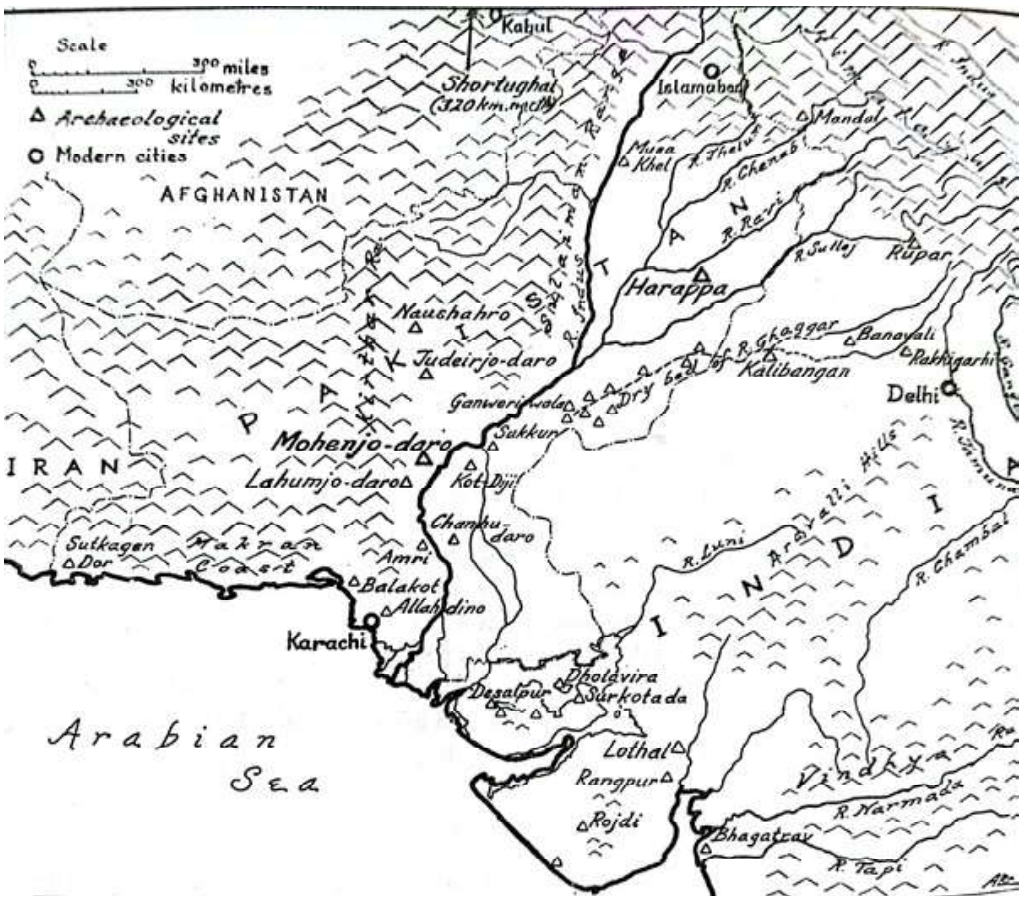
It is important to mention here that when the unqualified term, Harappan civilization, is mentioned the reference is to the urban phase. Now let's discuss the chief characteristics of Mature Harappan phase.

6.2 DEFINING THE MATURE HARAPPAN

Harappan culture was a long complex process of evolution. It consists of three phases: Early, Mature and Late. The Early phase has been dealt with in the previous unit. Here in this unit we will be studying the Mature phase.

One of the distinguishing features of the Mature Harappan phase is its artefacts and technology (Possehl 2003). We have a new pottery (style, clay fabrics, vessel forms and painting), even though there may be some continuities with the earlier ones. There is an increasing use of metal and introduction of bronze. The new metallic objects include pots, pans, copper tablets, blades, fishhooks, razor and others. The use of baked bricks is very common and there is now standardization across the sites. There is expansion of bead making, widespread use of carnelian, and development of a complex technology to drill the hard stones. Along with this, there is usage of writing at all the sites. More than 4000 Indus inscriptions have been found. Sites like Harappa and Mohenjodaro; Ganweriwala in Cholistan; Dholavira in Kutch; and Rakhigarhi in Haryana were large settlements and symbolize aggregates of population.

The chief characteristic of this phase is its uniformity. The sites whether located in Baluchistan, Punjab or even Gujarat show usage of uniform kind of artefacts. All the buildings were made using bricks in proportion of 1:2:4. A common system of weights and measures was in use. The motifs on the seals display one kind of iconography. Nearly all sites can boast of unprecedented civic amenities such as roomy houses with bathrooms, serviceable roads, elaborate system of drainage, water supply system. Despite the impressive unity, some sites display some differences in town planning, and religious beliefs. Also, some of the regions were less integrated. Possehl (2003) estimates the transition to have occurred between 2600-2500 BCE, but we still don't understand the factors that led to this change.



Map: Sites of the Harappan Civilization. Source: EHI-02, Block 2.

6.3 SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

Urban and rural settlements were functionally connected in important ways and indicate some kind of administrative organization. The fact that the Indus civilization was urban does not automatically indicate that all its settlements, big and small, were urban in character. The cities depended on villages for food and perhaps also labour. Cities produced various kinds of goods which reached the far-flung villages as a result of brisk rural-urban interaction. This led to uniformity in artefactual material throughout the Indus civilization.

Different kinds of settlements existed. The largest settlements include Mohenjodaro (over 200 ha.), Harappa (over 150 ha.), Ganweriwala (over 81.5 ha.), Rakhigarhi (over 80 ha.), Dholavira (about 100 ha.). Recently during explorations some very large sites in Punjab have come to light. These are Dhalewan (150 ha.) in Mansa district and Gurni Kalan I (144 ha.), Hasanpur II (about 100 ha.), Lakhmirwala (225 ha.), Baglian Da Theh (100 ha.) in Bhatinda district. So far, no excavations have been carried out in these Panjab sites. The second rung of settlements is of moderate size ranging from 10-50 ha. These are Judeirjodano and Kalibangan. Then there are even smaller sites falling in the range of 5-10 ha. such as Amri, Lothal, Chanhudaro and Rojdi. Settlements smaller than 5 ha. include Allahdino, Surkotada, Nageshwar, Nausharo, Ghazishah.

Some kind of planning was common to all the settlements. There was no strict correlation between the size of the settlement and the level of planning. For example, the small site of Lothal shows a high degree of planning, and Kalibangan, though twice the size does not.

6.4 MAJOR SITES

In this section, we will study some of the major sites of this civilization. As noted earlier, one of the main features of this phase is its sheer uniformity in culture. The buildings, whether located in Sindh, Punjab or Rajasthan were built using bricks in the ratio 1:2:4. The dimensions for the house bricks were 7×14×28 cms. and for the city wall it was 10×20×40 cms. In town planning, most settlements were divided into two areas: a citadel and a lower town. Both were fortified or surrounded by a wall. In the citadel mound, we often encountered important buildings and an occasional residence. Most of the residences and workshops were mostly located in the lower town. In some sites like Harappa, Mohenjodaro and Kalibangan, the citadel was often constructed at a distance from the lower town, while at other sites like Banawali, Lothal and Dholavira, both were located within the same compound. One of the most impressive characteristics of the Harappan settlements is their drainage system.

6.4.1 Mohenjodaro in Sindh

One of the first sites to be excavated, Mohenjodaro is located to the west of the river Indus. It is about 200 ha. The site consists of two mounds — a western citadel mound and eastern lower town. Both the mounds are built on an artificial platform and were fortified. Its population has been estimated to be around 20,000 to 40,000 people.

Some of the major buildings were discovered here. The most famous is a structure known as the Great Bath (Figure 6.1)

It is about 14.5 m. in length, 7 m. in breadth and nearly 2.4 m. in depth. It is made of bricks set in gypsum mortar. The floor and the steps leading to it were made water-proof through an application of a layer of bitumen. Further, the floor had a small inlet located on the south-west that was connected to a drain. This was

Fig. 6.1: Great Bath in the Foreground at Mohenjodaro. Credit: M.Imran at English Wikipedia.

Source: Wikimedia Commons. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Bath,_Mohenjo-daro#/media/File:Mohenjodaro_Sindh.jpeg

done to regulate the water. The bath might have been surrounded by a set of brick pillars on all the sides except the south where the entrance may have been located. The purpose of the bath is debatable. Many consider it to have been used for ritual ablution, while others argue it to be a public pool.

Some of the structures adjacent to the Great Bath, have been identified as 'Priest's College' and 'Granary'. One of the square structures on the southern side of the mound has been interpreted as an 'Assembly Hall' where the inhabitants gathered to discuss important matters.

In general, the houses on the eastern mound consist of a courtyard surrounded by rooms. The number of rooms varied. The thickness of the walls indicates that some were two storied. The smaller houses could have also doubled as workshops. Most houses had toilets which were well connected with the city's drainage system. For water, the town had around 700 wells with many houses having one private well.

6.4.2 Harappa in Punjab (Pakistan)

The site is located near a dried river bed of river Ravi. The citadel area was surrounded by a thick mud-brick wall. On its north, we have another mound on which Wheeler identified a 'Granary' (Figure 6.2). There are two blocks separated by a central aisle. Each block had around 5 rooms. In the walls that survive today we have some gaps. This according, to Wheeler, was to provide air circulation to keep the grains fresh. A similar technique was adopted in the granaries of the Roman civilization. A series of burnt-brick circular platforms were discovered to the south of this complex. They resemble closely the threshing floors found in India today. Burnt wheat and husked barley have been found in the crevices. This could further confirm that the structure was a granary.

6.4.3 Kalibangan in Rajasthan

The site is located to the west of now dried up river Ghaggar. The site also consists of a higher citadel mound on the west, and a lower residential mound on

Fig. 6.2: View of Granary and Great Hall at Mound F in Harappa. Credit: Mohammad Bin Naveed. Source: Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Another_view_of_Granary_and_Great_Hall_on_Mound_F.JPG

the east. Inside, the citadel is divided into a northern and southern sector by a wall. In the northern sector, we have recovered few houses and a road. The southern sector has no residential structure. Instead we have a series of mud brick platforms. One of the platforms has a few altars containing ash, charcoal, and clay stele. Next to it, we have a few bathing platforms connected with a corbelled drain. The whole complex may indicate practice of a sacrificial cult, although it has been disputed.

Fire altars were also discovered in the residences of the eastern lower mound. Some houses were perhaps double storied. As noted earlier, they had oblong fire altars. Were these hearths or sacrificial pits cannot be ascertained.

6.4.4 Banawali in Haryana

The site is located to the right of the dried river Rangoi. It is rectangular in plan covering an area of nine ha. The entire unit was fortified. Unlike the sites surveyed so far, the citadel and the lower town here are located within the same complex. The residences were provided with bathing pavements, wells and drains. A multi-roomed house which gave evidence for seals, and weights has been identified as a 'merchant's house'.

6.4.5 Dholavira in Gujarat

It is located on an island in the Rann of Kutch. In many ways, this site in quite unique among the Harappan settlements, and its location perhaps affected several aspects of its town planning. For instance, instead of bricks, the buildings here are mainly built using the locally available sandstone. The site is also known for the arrangements it has made to conserve water (Figure 6.3).

Fig. 6.3: Dholavira. Stepwell Steps to Reach the Water Level in Artificially Constructed Reservoir. Credit: Lalit Gajjer.

Source: Wikimedia Commons. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dholavira#/media/File: DHOLAVIRA_ SITE_(24).jpg

The town plan is unique. Instead of two, it has three areas: citadel-bailey complex, middle town and a lower town located within the same fortified complex. One of the rooms in the castle-bailey area has a fallen signboard (Figure 6.4). The letters are made of white gypsum and are inscribed on a wooden board.

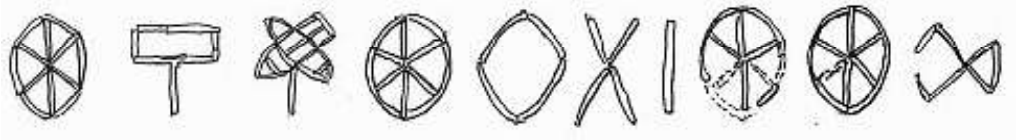


Fig. 6.4: 'Signboard' with Indus Characters discovered near the northern gate of the citadel at Dholavira. Credit: Siyajkak

Source: Wikimedia Commons. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indus_Valley_Civilisation#/media/File:The_'Ten_Indus_Scripts'_discovered_near_the_northern_gateway_of_the_Dholavira_ citadel.jpg

In the Lower town in order to meet its water requirement, the inhabitants here have cut water reservoirs into the bedrock. Around 16 such reservoirs (Figure 6.5) were discovered.

Fig. 6.5: Dholavira. Credit: Rama's Arrow.

Source: Wikimedia Commons. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dholavira#/media/File:Dholavira1. JPG

6.4.6 Lothal in Gujarat

This was a port town of the Harappans. It is located in a low deltaic area in the Saurashtra peninsula. It is believed that the sea once was much closer to the site.

Fig. 6.6: Lothal Dockyard. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lothal_dock.jpg

Both the citadel and the lower town are located within the same complex. From one of the buildings, in the citadel, around 65 terracotta sealings having impressions of reed, woven fiber, cords, and matting have been recovered. This implies that it was a warehouse or place where the goods were packed. This shows active involvement of the site in trade. This is confirmed by another structure located to the east of the town: the dockyard (Figure 6.6). It too is enclosed by a burnt brick wall. It is provided with two inlets and spill channels to regulate the water. An additional platform on the west was constructed to help with the unloading of goods.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Match the following sites with their present-day geographical location:

i)	Harappa	a)	Rajasthan
ii)	Kalibangan	b)	Sindh (Pakistan)
iii)	Mohenjodaro	c)	Makran Coast (Pakistan-Iran Border)
iv)	Sutkagen-Dor	d)	West Punjab (Pakistan)

2) Discuss two main sites of the Harappan civilization.

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3) How would you ascertain that the structure found at Lothal is a dockyard?

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6.5 ECONOMY

The Harappan civilization occupied a varied landscape. It included alluvial plains, mountains, plateau, and sea coasts. The area was rich enough to generate surplus which was crucial for urbanization. The main sources which are used to reconstruct the subsistence patterns of the Indus people are plant remains, animal bones, artefacts, motifs on seals and pottery and analogies with modern practices.

One aspect which differentiates the Mature Harappan phase from the Early Harappan is the scale of economic activity. Rita Wright sees this period as being characterized by intensification, diversification and specialization. Intensification means an increase in the output of both agriculture and crafts. Diversification means a development of a wide variety of products. These two developments encouraged specialization which means individuals devoting time to one economic activity. For instance, in Early Harappan period a farmer might also be a part-time pastoralist or part-time weaver. An increase in agriculture might mean

that the farmer was now devoting more time and energy to farming, leaving other activities to other full-time specialists. Another development was the adoption of better technology in several crafts. Let us survey the various economic spheres.

Agriculture

The cultivation of rabi or winter crops seems to be the dominant practice in Harappan civilization. The main rabi crops were wheat, barley, pea, chickpea, sesame, mustard and lentil. The increase in the cultivation of kharif or summer crops like millet and rice distinguishes this phase from Early Harappan. Millet has been recovered from several sites: Lothal, Rojdi, Kuntasi, Surkotada, and Shikarpur. Outside Gujarat, it was also cultivated in Harappa, Kunal, and Sanghol. Rice is known from Harappa, Kunal, Kalibangan, Lothal, and Rangpur.

Among the implements used, we know of a terracotta plough model from Banawali and Bahawalpur. A ploughed field has been revealed at Kalibangan. Though it is of the Early Harappan, we can safely surmise that the practice continued in later periods too. The Kalibangan field consisted of two sets of furrows crossing each other at right angles, thus forming a grid pattern. It is likely that two crops were raised in the same field. Today, mustard and horse gram are grown together in different set of furrows.

Copper sickles have been recovered from several sites. The irrigation techniques must have varied from region to region. In Sind, it is possible that floods in the Indus were exploited for irrigation purposes, a technique known as sheet-flooding. This might explain the building of the cities on artificial platforms, to protect them from floods. The existence of canal irrigation has been proposed for Ghaggar-Hakra, though it is controversial. The arid regions of Baluchistan might have used *gabarbund*-like structures. These structures are used in present-day area to capture or slow down the water coming down the hills. In Gujarat, we have already mentioned the existence of reservoirs at sites like Dholavira.

Domestic animals found at the sites include cattle, buffalo, sheep, goat, pig, camel, elephant, dog, cat, ass and others. Cattle meat was preferred. Cattle and buffaloes must have supported agriculture and served as draught animals. The presence of horse is considered controversial.

Hunting of animals was an important activity. Animals hunted include wild buffalo, deer, wild pig, ass, jackal, rodents and hare. The site of Harappa has given evidence of marine cat fish. Hence it seems that coastal communities may have traded in dried fish in inland settlements. Food gathering was also practiced. Wild rice was consumed in the Ganga Yamuna Doab. At Surkotada, most of the seeds recovered are wild which include wild nuts, grasses and weeds.

The Harappans thus depended on multiple subsistence strategies. This was done to mitigate risk. If crops failed, they could depend upon hunting.

Crafts

A wide range of crafts were practiced in the Mature period. We see intensification in terms of technological processes from the preceding period. Besides the range of raw materials used expanded. It seems from the archaeological record that the Harappans used more copper than bronze.

Pottery

The most common pottery occurring in the Harappan cities is the red ware. It is a wheel-made and baked pottery. There are both plain and decorated pots. Ochre was used to produce red colour for paintings and black was manufactured by combining dark reddish-brown iron oxide with black manganese. The paintings or motifs were executed in black and were mostly geometric or naturalistic designs. These include *pipal* leaves, fish-scales and intersecting circles which have continued from the Early Harappan phase. The pottery occurs in shapes like dish-on-stand, vase with S-profile, small vessel with knobbed decoration, goblet with pointed foot. Pottery kilns have been found at Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Nausharo and Chanhudaro

Metallurgy

Harappans were aware of copper, gold and silver metallurgy. Copper was widely used, and it occurs in the form of weapons, agricultural tools like sickles, carpentry tools like chisels; ornaments like kohl-sticks, finger-rings, bangles, earrings and miscellaneous objects like fish-hooks, needles, scale-pans and figurines (Figure 6.7). At times, it was alloyed with tin, arsenic, lead, nickel and zinc in various combinations. A study of these objects shows that Harappans knew techniques like forging, sinking, hot and cold welding. The objects were mostly polished. Sixteen copper furnaces have been found at Lothal. A large amount of copper oxide was discovered in a brick lined pit at Mohenjodaro.

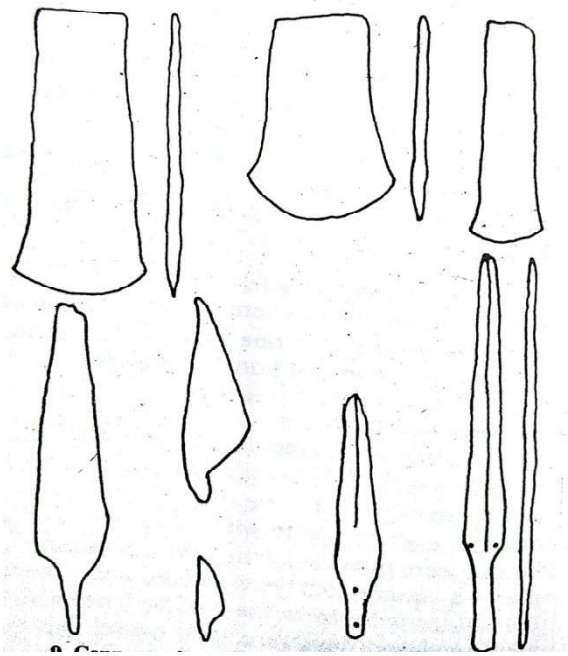

Fig.6.7: Copper and Bronze Toole Used by the Harappans.

Source: EHI-02, Block 2, Unit 6, p. 24

Besides these, Harappans also manufactured ornaments of gold and silver. It has been recovered from Mohenjodaro, Harappa, and Allahdino.

Bead-Making

The most famous artefacts manufactured by Harappans were their beads. Some like carnelian beads were an important export item. The beads of both precious metals, and semi-precious stones like agate, jasper, steatite, and lapis lazuli were

known. We also have beads of terracotta, bone, faience and shell. The most significant development in the Mature phase was the use of hard drill to perforate hard semi-precious stones (Possehl 2003). Other steps included flaking and sawing the material to required shape and heating them to impart them the correct colour. The famous 36 long-barrel cylinder carnelian beads might have taken 480 days to produce. This means that this craft was a highly specialized activity. Bead-making workshops have been recovered from Mohenjodaro and Chanhudaro, and Lothal.

Faience

Several faience objects in the form of beads, bangles, earrings, figurines have been recovered from several Harappan sites. It is an artificial material manufactured from quartz. Given the complexity of its technology, Kenoyer has called it an elite item.

Stoneware Bangles

This, according to Kenoyer, is another elite item that may be closely associated with the ruling class. For some reasons, these bangles have been only discovered from the sites in Pakistan: Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Balakot and Nausharo. The term stoneware is misleading as objects were not made of stone but terracotta. The finely levigated clay was fired at very high temperatures 1050-1100º C. The reason of them being considered elite is because of the nature of their find. They have been recovered in special canisters sealed with Indus seal. Unlike other bangles, they have inscriptions or potter's mark inscribed on them. Dilip. K. Chakrabarti (2006), however, points out that the occurrence of these in small sites like Nausharo may not support this claim of being associated with the elite.

Lithic Industry

The advent of metals didn't signify the end of stone tools. Harappans continued to use stone blades and bladelets. Chert continued to be an important raw material. Several workshops manufacturing them were located near the Sukkur-Rohri hills in northern Sindh. Each workshop had a specialized task. Some manufactured blades were 8 cm. long and more. Others worked on waste cores to convert them into smaller bladelets. Other than Sindh, sites in Gujarat, like Lothal, too manufactured blades of locally available stone (Figure 6.8).

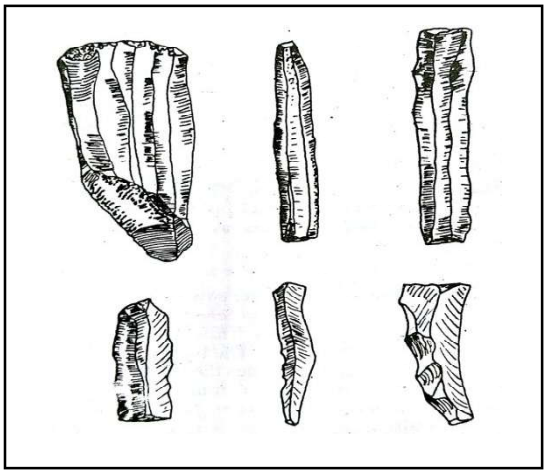

Fig. 6.8: Stone Blade Tools (Mohenjodaro).

Source: EHI-02, Block 2, Unit 6, p. 24

Shell–Processing

A wide variety of shell objects like bangles, ladles, spoons, inlay pieces, decorative objects have been recovered from the Indus sites. These were made of conch (*Turbinella*) from Makran, Kutch and Khambat coast, clam shells from Makran coast, and *Chicoreus* and *Fasciolaria* from Kutch and perhaps Oman. Manufacture of shell objects are known from Balakot, Nageswar and Kuntasi with some workshops also discovered in the interior sites like Harappa and Mohenjodaro. This implies that shell in raw form was highly valued and was an important trade item.

Steatite

Steatite was mainly used in the manufacturing of seals (Figure 6.9).

Fig. 6.9: Harappan Seals. Courtesy: Credit: World Imaging.

Source: Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IndusValleySeals.JPG

Seal making workshops are known from Harappa and Lothal. A variety of animals like short-horned bull, buffalo, bull, rhinoceros, tiger, crocodile are depicted on the seals. We also have mythical animals like unicorn, horned tiger, horned elephant, and others depicted on the seals. While most samples are square, about 10% recovered are rectangular. We can briefly comment on the usage of seals. In the contemporary civilization, the seals are used to secure goods over long-distance trade. The packages sealed could only be opened at the destination which protected the goods from tampering. At Lothal many seals were found in the warehouse. This indicates that the Indus seals had a similar purpose. Steatite was also used in manufacturing beads. The main workshops were located at Nausharo, Mohenjodaro and Chanhudaro.

Weights and Measures

The Harappans used a standardized system of weights and measures. Most weights were of cubical shape and made of chert. We also have few specimens made of

fine agate and jasper. The weights increased in one to sixty-four multiples of 0.871 grams. For linear measurement, we know of scales made of shell, ivory, and copper from Mohenjodaro, Lothal and Harappa.

6.6 DRAINAGE

One of the most impressive characteristics of the Harappan settlements is their drainage system. Sites like Harappa, Kalibangan, Nausharo, Chanhudaro, Allahdino, Dholavira, Lothal, Mohenjodaro have given evidence of elaborate drainage facilities. The specific features of the elaborate drainage system include management of waste water inside the houses, intramural drains, vertical drain pipes in the walls, chutes through walls to the streets, drains from bathing floors into street drains (Possehl, 2003). The street drains at all sites were made of baked bricks. The one at Allahdino is of stone. We also have evidence for the use of gypsum and lime plaster in the bottom of the drains at Mohenjodaro. In fact, at Mohenjodaro, drains dated to Early Harappa and the Transitional phases have been found. Drains were raised with very building period.

Most of the drains were covered with brick or stone. Small settling pools and traps were built into the system of drainage to catch coarse sediment. This was periodically collected.

Baths were commonly constructed in the houses. The slope of the platform, bricks on the floor, raised rim around the platform, the smooth finish provided to the floors, coating of a plaster of lime and brick dust all indicate the utmost care taken in fashioning these bathrooms.

6.7 ART

Compared to its contemporaries, Indus civilization is not particularly rich in art. We have recovered some human and animal figurines. Most human figurines were handmade and were made from bronze, terracotta, steatite and faience material. We have both male and female figurines with sex of some not being identifiable. The female figurines were adorned with elaborate jewellery and headdress. Many of them were recovered from Harappa, Mohenjodaro and Banawali. Some crude specimens were discovered at Lothal. The most famous is a bronze figurine called the ‘Dancing girl’. The specimen is about 11.25 cm high. It depicts a slim girl, whose one hand rests slightly above her left knee and other on her hip. The left hand is completely covered in bangles while the right only has four bracelets. She also wears a necklace with three pendants. Her eyes are half-closed, and hair tied in a bun. She is wearing a necklace having three pendants/amulets (Figure 6.10). Her pose does not indicate any dancing step, but she was labeled as ‘dancing girl’ by John Marshall as she reminded him of nautch girls. Another important sculpture is the priest-king (Figure 6.11). It is a male figurine, about 7 inches in height. The eyes of the figure are half-closed, focusing on the tip of the nose. He is wearing a shawl decorated with trefoil motif that covers his chest and left shoulder. We have also discovered animal figurines from many sites. These could have been used as toys, a few of them could be amulets or ornaments (John Marshall 1931).

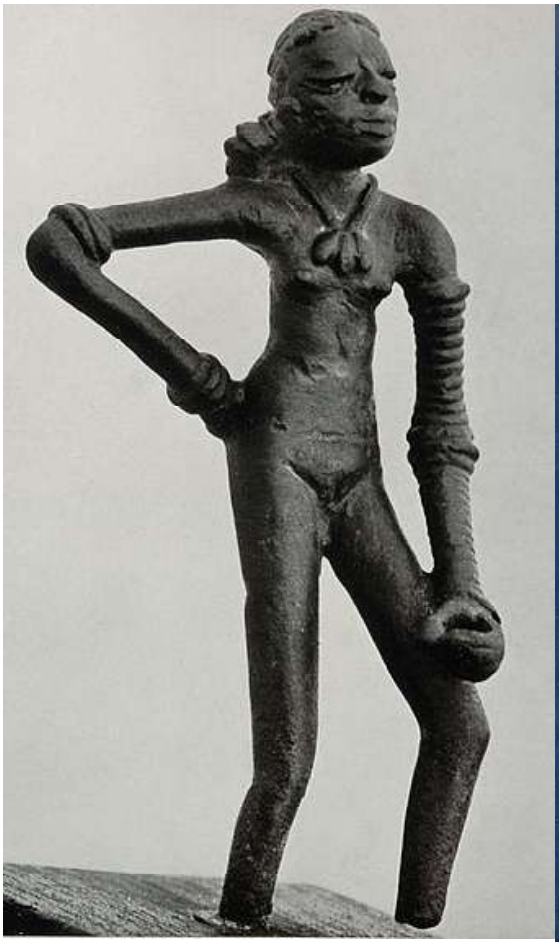

Fig. 6.10: 'Dancing Girl' of Mohenjodaro. Credit: Alfred Nawrath.

Source: Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Dancing_ Girl,_in_ a_photogravure_by_ Alfred_Nawrath,1938.jpg

Fig. 6.11:'Priest King', Mohenjodaro. National Museum, Karachi, Pakistan. Credit: Mamoon Mengal.

Source: Wikimedia Commons .https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mohenjo-daro_Priesterk% C3%B6nig.jpeg

6.8 TRADE

Internal Trade

Harappan trade was based on barter. A wide variety of goods were traded. Thus, the shell from as far away as Makran and Kutch coast reached Harappa to be processed into bangles. Sukkur-Rohri hills provided many sites with their chert blades. Further, the presence of seals and uniform weights implied an existence of a regulated internal trade network. The actual trade routes can only be inferred by locating the sources of the raw materials and understanding the location of sites. Baluchistan supplied copper, lead, jasper, agate and *silajit* to the Harappan cities via southern Sindh. From the location of Harappan sites and material, we can infer three routes: the Mula pass, the passes in Sindh's Kohistan and a coastal route connecting Sutkagen Dor and Shahi Tump in Baluchistan with Balakot Sindh.

The sites in Sindh further supplied materials like shell and flint to the sites in Punjab. This trade might have been conducted on the river Indus. From the distribution of Harappan sites, we can infer a land route going from Karachi district to Multan via Larkana district and Sukkur-Rohri hills. Punjab, in turn, was well connected with several sites in Rajasthan, Haryana, Baluchistan and Afghanistan. Two trade routes connected Rajasthan with Punjab. One, a land-

riverine route connected Multan to southern Rajasthan through Bahawalpur, Anupgarh, Mahajan, Lunkaransar, Bikaner and Jaipur with ferry crossings at Sutlej and Ghaggar-Hakra. Second, a land route connected Multan and Bikaner via Pugal. Rajasthan provided gold, silver, lead, semi-precious stones and copper to the rest of the sites, and in return acquired chert and shell. Two land routes connected Punjab through Haryana: one connecting Bahawalpur, and going through the upper Sutlej area, and another, through the Ghaggar-Drishadvati divide in central Punjab. They thus, acquired copper, silver, emerald, and semi-precious stones from Rajasthan, and shell and flint from Sindh. Punjab was also connected to Baluchistan through the Salt range and hill outliers like Chiniot, Kirana and Dhak. These hills are rich in raw materials like steatite, gypsum, jasper, limestone, slate, granite, basalt, marble, quartzite, sandstone, *abri*, copper, lead, gold and haematite. Another route followed the Indus River, connecting Harappa to site Gumla, and from here on to the sites in Central Asia.

External Trade

Indus civilization might have interacted and exchanged goods with contemporary civilizations. Many of the Indus artefacts have been discovered from many sites in West Asia.

An important export item to the cities of Mesopotamia was long barrel-cylinder carnelian beads and etched carnelian beads. In Ur, they were discovered in the royal graves dated around 2600 BCE. Etched carnelian beads were also discovered from Ur, Kish, Nippur, Assur, and Tell Asmar. In addition, recovery of Indus and Indus-like seals also support the existence of trade. Seals have been recovered from Kish, Lagash, Nippur, Tell Asmar, Tepe Gawra, Ur. An Indus weight was recovered from Ur and from Tepe Gawra and Al Hiba we recovered an Indus dice.

The Mesopotamian texts (time of King Sargon, 2334-2279 BCE) tell us about trading links with Dilmun, Magan and Meluhha. Dilmun is identified with Bahrain, and Magan with the Makran coast. There is some controversy on the identification of Meluhha. The text tell us about the ships from Meluhha bringing in copper, tin, lapis lazuli, carnelian, ebony, gold, silver, ivory, wood of mulberry, sisso, and date palm. It is not clear whether Meluhha refers to Harappans. D.K. Chakrabarti argues that given the kind of materials involved, it might refer to the areas east of Mesopotamia, than to the Harappan civilization.

Other than Mesopotamia, sites located in the gulf areas like Bahrain, Failaka, Sharjah and the Oman peninsula have given us Indus or Indus-inspired objects. Ras-al-Qala, Hamad, Hajjar, Failaka had seals with Indus characters. Tell Abraq had ivory comb, possibly from Indus. In Oman, Ras-al-Junayaz gave a variety of Harappan objects: inscribed sherd, steatite seal, ivory comb with a wood coated with bitumen. In Turkmenia, sites of Altyn Tepe and Namazga have yielded Indus related objects. A square soapstone/ablaster seal with Indus pictographs was recovered from Altyn Tepe. From Namazga, an ithyphallic terracotta figure similar to one discovered in Harappan civilization was recovered.

Carnelian beads were also exported to the sites in north and south Iran. They were recovered from Hissar, Shah Tepe, and Marlik in north Iran, and Shahdad, Tepe Yahya, Jalalabad, and Kalleh Nisar. In addition, Tepe Yahya also had a sherd stamped with Indus seal, and a terracotta object depicting a man seated in

lotus position dated to 2320 BCE. Kalleh Nisar had three Indus-like seals. In Susa, two seals – cylinder and circular had Indus characters. In Shahr-i-Sokhta, Xancus pyrum shells originating from Gujarat coast were found.

Besides West Asia, Harappans also had trade contacts with Afghanistan and Central Asia. Lapis lazuli from Afghanistan and tin from Central Asia were greatly valued. The site of Shortughai in Afghanistan was perhaps established to facilitate this trade. Some sites like Dashly 3 in north Afghanistan have given us proof for contacts with the Harappan. From the palace at the site, we discovered artefacts with Indus-like trefoil motifs, humped bulls on alabaster plates, and kidney shaped vases of steatite.

6.9 SOCIETY

The composition of the Harappan society from the archaeological records is fairly clear. From the economic activities, we can infer the presence of various craft specialists, traders, and farmers in the society. The construction of important buildings like citadels, granaries indicates the existence of a labour class. The presence of seals, standardization of artefacts, use of uniform weights indicate the existence of a ruling class which regulated various economic activities. While the debate on the nature of Harappan religion continues, there is no doubt that there existed a priestly class

The Rulers

The debate on Harappan polity consists of several issues. Did it consist of a single empire? Were there different kingdoms that were following a common ideology? What kind of rulers existed: autocratic or corporate? Was the civilization at the level of a state or chiefdom?

Wheeler and Stuart Piggot state that it was one empire ruled by autocratic priest-kings helped by an efficient bureaucracy. However W. Fairservis believes that centralized rule needs military enforcement and a standing army. The Harappan cities lack military character. Instead, the impressive uniformity of the cities could have been due to a religious ideology. S.C. Malik agrees. However other scholars believe that this uniformity could have been achieved through the needs of the internal trade than a political authority. These arguments attempt to see Harappan polity as a very simple organization. Fairservis has even advocated a village-like authority regulating the cities.

M. Kenoyer has argued for the presence of both state-level and chiefdom-level polities among the Harappans, with larger settlements being at the state-level and the smaller settlements in remote areas being at the level of the chiefdom. He further argues that urban settlements like Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Rakhigarhi and Ganeriwala could have been independent city-states with several urban elite competing for power.

J. Jacobson surveyed the various aspects of Harappan civilization to conclude that the civilization shows 'state level of socio-cultural integration' as seen from cultural and perhaps linguistic uniformity achieved over a large area, standardization of planning and others. However, in terms of polity it may have been at an early state level as seen in its weak military component and weak level of stratification.

In the end we can say that some sort of political authority/State did exist in the Harappan civilization. The political authority that was present was different from the one at Mesopotamia or Egypt. The communications systems, standardization of artefacts, site specialization, mobilization of labour for public works, use of common system of writing, cultural homogeneity, and the establishment of trading outposts like Shortughai — all these elements indicate a level of complexity which could not have been possible without some kind of political authority.

6.10 RELIGION

One of the first understandings of Harappan religion was forwarded by John Marshall. Based on the data available from Mohenjodaro and Harappa, he observed many similarities between the Harappan religion and the later-day Hinduism. One of the seals was identified by him as 'Proto-Siva' seal (figure 6.12).

Fig. 6.12: 'Proto Siva' Seal

Source: Wikimedia Commons. Credit: http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00routesdata/bce_500back/indusvalley/protoshiva/protoshiva.jp

This seal has a male figure seated on a dais. His heels are joined, and toes point downward. Both his arms are covered with bangles, and rest on the knees. This position is very similar to *mulabandhasana* in yoga. The historic Siva was associated with yoga and was known as *mahayogi.* The figure is also surrounded by six animals: elephant, rhinoceros, water buffalo, tiger, two ibexes/antelopes. On this basis he can be interpreted as the Lord of animals or as '*pashupati'* (Marshall, 1931). Beneath his seat, we have two animals identified either as ibex

or antelopes. The figure is three-faced, very similar to some of the later depictions of Siva.

Other evidence that can be brought forth to support the existence of the Siva are the cylindrical stones from Mohenjodaro and Harappa which could be seen as *siva-linga.* However the Proto-Siva theory has been contested.

Besides the presence of a male deity Marshall postulated the presence of Mother Goddess worship in the Indus civilization. Two kinds of data are available: seals and figurines. Among several female figurines discovered at Mohenjodaro and Harappa, Marshall pointed out the one with fan-shaped headdress, wearing bead necklace and short-skirt to be a mother goddess. This figurine is very similar to the one found in other ancient cultures. She represents mother or nature goddess. The female figurines are mostly found in the sites on the side of Pakistan. On the Indian side, we can think of Banawali in Haryana which has yielded these figurines in large numbers. This suggests that mother-goddess cult was popular in a few areas. Sites like Kalibangan, Lothal, and also Banawali have evidence for fire altars. This could indicate the existence of a sacrificial ritual at least in some Harappan cities.

Harappans might have also venerated *pipal* trees. One seal depicts seven figures paying obeisance to the tree. A horned figure stands on the tree. Some scholars argue that this scene is reminiscent of later-day *saptmatrikas.* Some even identify the figures as *sapt-rishis*. But nothing definite can be said.

In architecture, very few buildings have been identified as temples. The funerary practice of Harappans shows great deal of variations. Both cremation and burial were known. While some sites like Mohenjodaro have burials within the settlement; separate cemeteries have been found at Harappa, Kalibangan, Lothal, Dholavira and more recently Rakhigarhi. In recent excavations, unique burials were discovered from Dholavira and Rakhigarhi. Dholavira has some evidence of megaliths, but these are mostly symbolic burials. A unique feature at Rakhigarhi was that in the cemetery the female burials often had more burial goods than the male burials.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Discuss the architectural features and drainage system of the Harappan settlements?

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2) What were the major elements of Harappan religion?

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3) Describe the main features of the economy of the Harappans.

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4) Which of the following statements are correct?

i) Siva seems to be the most important Harappan God. ( )

ii) The female deities were absent in Harappan religious objects. ( )

iii) Trees also seem to have been worshipped by the Harappans. ( )

iv) No animals were worshipped by the Harappans. ( )

6.11 SUMMARY

This is briefly an overview of the society, economy and polity of the Mature Harappan phase. The area covered by the civilization is very large. The Harappans were able to maintain remarkable uniformity for almost 500 years. However, they followed varied subsistence patterns, food habits, craft traditions, religious beliefs, cultic practices and social customs.

The Mature Harappan phase is characterized by urbanization. In the field of crafts, economy, trade, metallurgy, art we see intensification from the preceding levels. The settlements are noted for their public architecture, drainage, division of the settlement into citadel and lower town, fortification walls, granaries, wells, roads, sewage disposal system, seals, pottery and craft items. From 1800 BCE, we witness a change in the archaeological data. The urban phase had completely ended. Some of the sites like Kalibangan and Banawali were completely abandoned. The smaller and poor cultures have been labeled as Late Harappan. We shall study in the next unit greater details of this phase, along with the reasons for the decline of the Harappan civilization.

6.12 KEY WORDS

Bailey : It is a fortified courtyard attached to the castle.

Chiefdom/Early State: This represents the next level after tribe. It is sedentary, has greater population and specialization. They are led by a chief, who is much more powerful than his tribal counterpart. The only element missing is social stratification.

Fortified/Fortification: Surrounded by a wall.

Lost wax process : It is metal shaping process in which melted metal is poured into a desired mould made of wax. Once the metal is set, the wax is melted.

Megaliths : The term consist of two words '*mega*' or big and '*lithic*' or stone. In many cultures across the world, the dead were often buried in monuments built of large stone slabs.

Moat : An artificial water body built surrounding the building to protect it.

Shaman : A person who achieves powers through a trance. They can communicate with the other world and possess healing powers.

Sinking : Also known as doming. It is a technique used in metallurgy by which a metal is hammered into desired shape.

State : A state is a far more complex entity. It is densely populated and has high level of surplus. The access to surplus depends on one's status, rank in the society. There is greater division of labour and social stratification. The power of the ruler is absolute.

Tribal society : This is a very simple society consisting of a collection of family groups. It has a simple economy dependent on agriculture and hunting, and small-scale craft production.

6.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) i) d ii) a iii) b iv) c
2) See Section 6.4 and its Sub-sections.
3) See Sub-section 6.4.6

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Please see Section 6.4 and its Sub- sections and Section 6.6.
2) See Section 6.10.
3) See Section 6.5 and 6.8
4) i and iii

6.14 SUGGESTED READINGS

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