

INDUS VALLEY CIVILISATION

The Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC), also known as the **Harappan Civilisation**, marks the **earliest urban culture in the Indian subcontinent**.

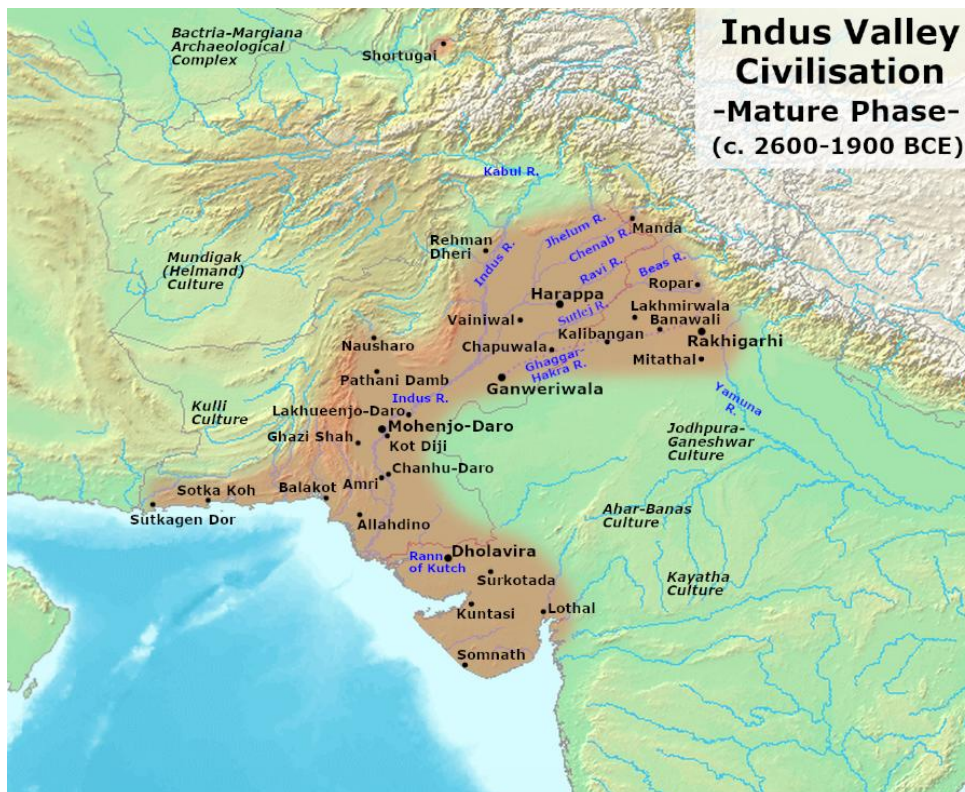
Timeline

- It flourished from around **3300 BCE to 1300 BCE**, with its mature phase between **2600 BCE and 1900 BCE**.
- The civilisation evolved through phases: **Pre-Harappan (c. 7000–5500 BCE)** with early farming at sites like **Mehrgarh**, Early Harappan (c. 5500–2800 BCE) featuring trade networks, and Late Harappan post-1900 BCE.

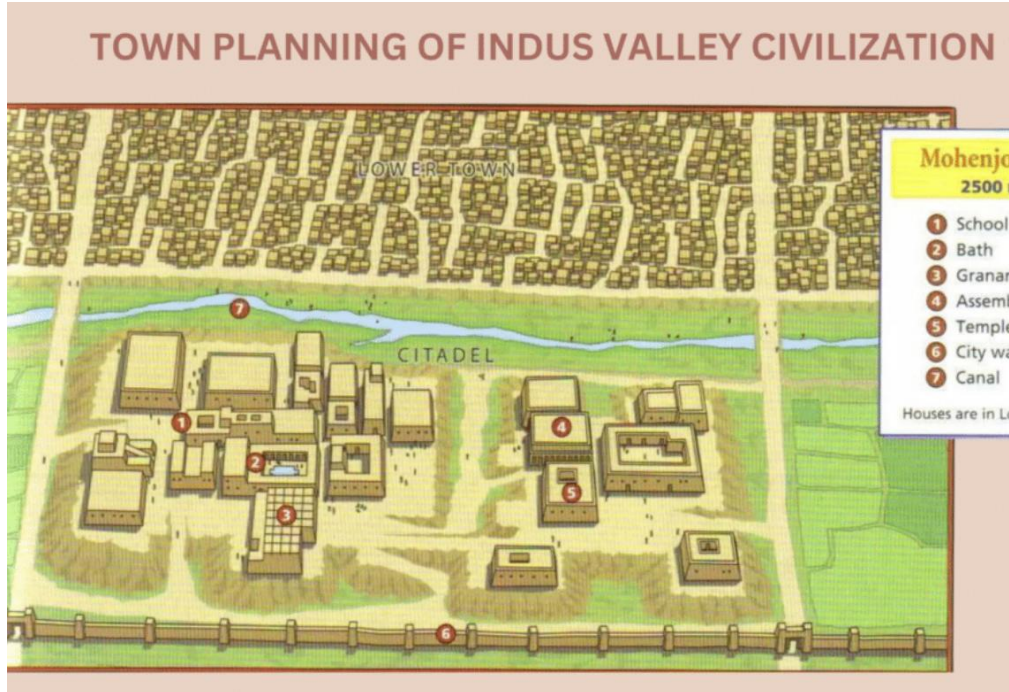
Geographical Extent

- Spanning modern-day Pakistan, northwest India, and parts of Afghanistan, it covered an area larger than ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia combined, centered along the Indus River and its tributaries like the Sarasvati.
- Key sites include **Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro, Dholavira, Lothal, and Rakhigarhi**.
- **Dholavira (Gujarat, Kutch)**: UNESCO site with reservoirs, fortifications, and the largest Harappan inscription; shows water management.

- **Rakhigarhi (Haryana): Largest IVC site in India**, with evidence from early to late phases including a cemetery.
- **Kalibangan (Rajasthan): Evidence of fire altars, ploughed fields**, and pre-Harappan culture.
- **Lothal (Gujarat): Port town** with a **dockyard**, bead factory, and **trade evidence**.



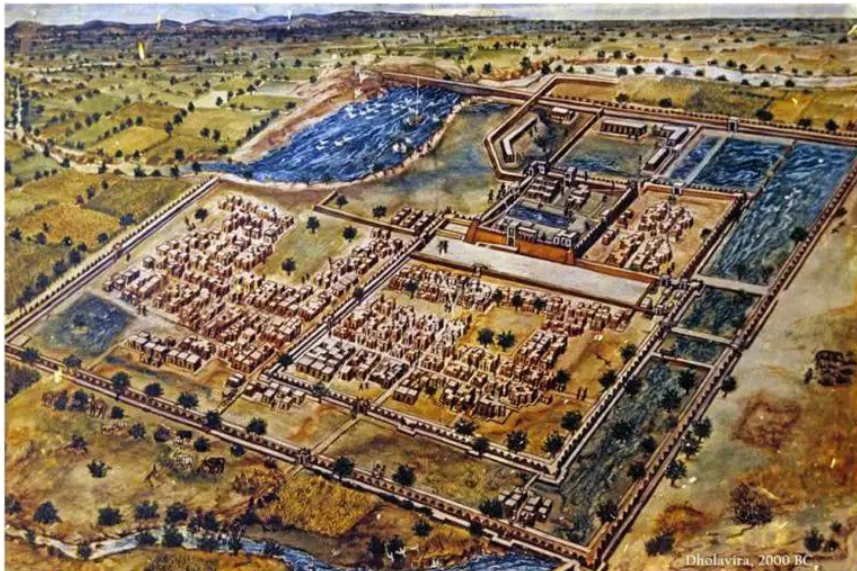
Overall town planning



- Indus Valley (Harappan) towns were among the **earliest examples of planned urban settlements, with a clear sense of order, zoning, and public utilities.**
- Mohenjo-daro archaeological site shows **ancient buildings and streets with a grid-like urban plan.**
- Cities like **Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, Kalibangan** and others were laid out on a **rectangular grid, with main streets running north-south and east-west, intersecting at right angles.**
- The city was usually divided into an elevated **citadel (western part)** and a **larger lower**

town (eastern part), indicating functional and social differentiation.

- **Fortified walls or ramparts** often enclosed the settlement, providing protection and also a clear boundary for urban space.

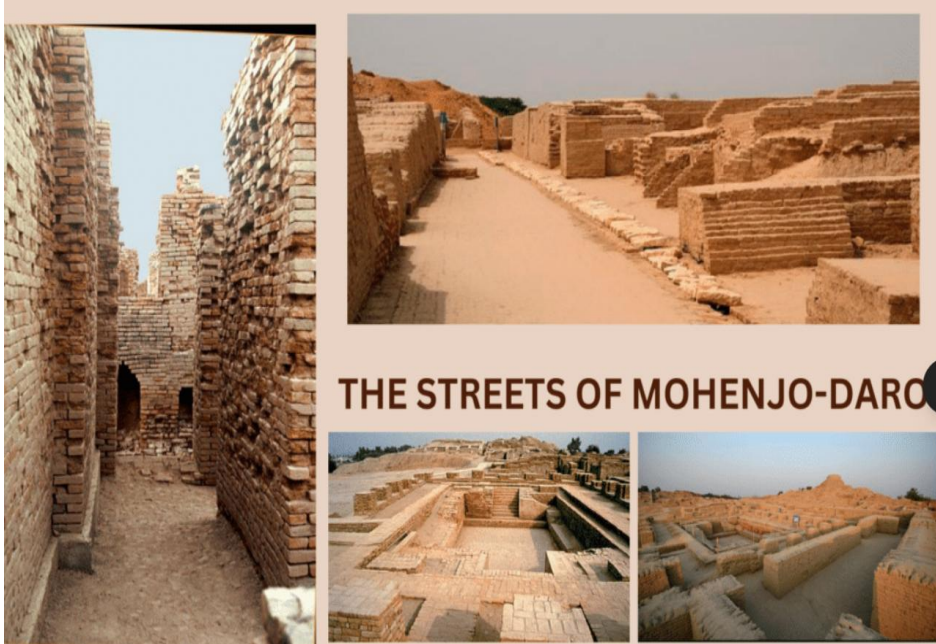




Streets, houses and materials

Mohenjo-Daro streets

- **Streets had a hierarchy:** wide main streets, narrower lanes, and very narrow by-lanes leading to residential blocks; corners were generally right-angled, showing prior planning.
- **Houses were made mainly of uniformly sized baked bricks**, often with **two storeys**, built around an **internal courtyard**, with separate bathing areas and access to wells.
- Many houses had **private wells**; some streets had public wells, showing concern for water supply at both household and community level



Drainage and sanitation



- **Every house had a bathroom or washing area** with a sloping floor leading to a small

drain, which connected to **covered street drains**.

- **Street drains were built of baked bricks, lined with mortar, lime, and gypsum**, and covered with brick or stone slabs; manholes at intervals allowed cleaning and maintenance.
- Drains are ultimately discharged outside the town, sometimes into large soak-pits or wells, indicating an integrated city-wide sewage system.

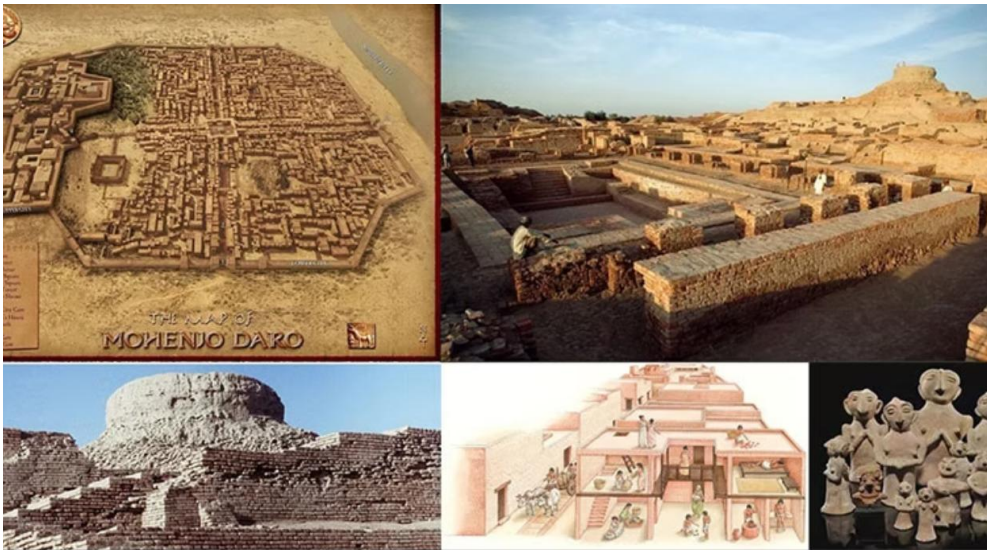
Major structures in cities

The **Great Bath, a large sunken brick structure**, at the Mohenjo-daro archaeological site.

- The **citadel housed monumental structures such** as the Great Bath at Mohenjo-daro, large granaries, assembly halls, and possible administrative or ritual buildings.
- **Granaries** were massive multi-roomed buildings with brick platforms and air-ducts, probably used to store surplus grain collected and redistributed by authorities.
- **At Dholavira**, in addition to the citadel and lower town, **there was a separately fortified middle town** and a large stadium-like structure, showing further specialization of urban space.

Special features and regional variations

- **Dholavira shows one of the earliest large-scale water management systems: rock-cut reservoirs**, channels guiding seasonal rainwater, and integrated storage around the settlement.
- Coastal sites like **Lothal had a dock-like basin connected to a channel**, warehouses near the dock, and evidence of trade-based planning.
- Some sites like Chanhudaro lacked a citadel, suggesting smaller specialized craft or trade towns within the broader Indus urban network.



Social Life of Indus Valley Civilisation

- The Indus Valley Civilization people enjoyed a **well-organized social life centered on family units, urban living, and simple entertainments in planned cities** like Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro.
- Their society showed **no rigid class divisions** but **featured professional groups like artisans and traders**, with evidence of literacy from seals and strong hygiene practices via advanced drainage.
- Daily routines blended work, play, and personal adornment in brick homes built around courtyards.

Family and Housing

- Families lived in **joint households** within **multi-story baked-brick homes** featuring courtyards, running water, bathrooms, and sewers for cleanliness.
- Craftsmen passed skills to children, emphasizing **family-based professions without a strict caste system**.
- **Women held prominence**, possibly in a matriarchal setup, as seen in **mother goddess worship**

Clothing and Ornaments

- People wore **cotton or woolen two-piece outfits**, with men in dhoti-like garments and shawls, and women in skirts plus upper shawls.
- **Both genders donned necklaces**, rings, and amulets; women added bangles, earrings, girdles, and **anklets made of gold, silver, ivory for the wealthy**, or shell, bone, copper for others.
- **Cosmetics** like lip balm and powders, along with mirrors and combs, highlight grooming focus.



Children and Pastimes

- Children played with **terracotta toys** including **animal figurines**, rattles, dolls, miniature carts, dice, and gaming boards, reflecting creativity and learning through play.
- **Adults enjoyed hunting, bull-fighting, fishing, clay modeling, music, and dance**, as suggested by figurines and artifacts.
- These activities fostered community bonds in a disciplined, **harmonious society**.



Arts and Entertainment

- Artistic expressions included **terracotta figurines, seals, and bronze statues** like the famous **dancing girl**, indicating a love for dance and aesthetics.

- Public hygiene and organized streets supported social interactions, while toys and games bridged generations.
- This blend of simplicity and sophistication defined their cultural life.

ECONOMIC LIFE OF IVC

- The Indus Valley Civilization featured a robust economy driven by **agriculture, skilled crafts, and extensive trade networks across regions like Mesopotamia and Central Asia.**
- People relied on **barter rather than currency**, using standardized weights and measures for fair exchanges of goods such as grains, cotton, and beads.
- This system supported **urban prosperity in well-planned cities with granaries and dockyards.**

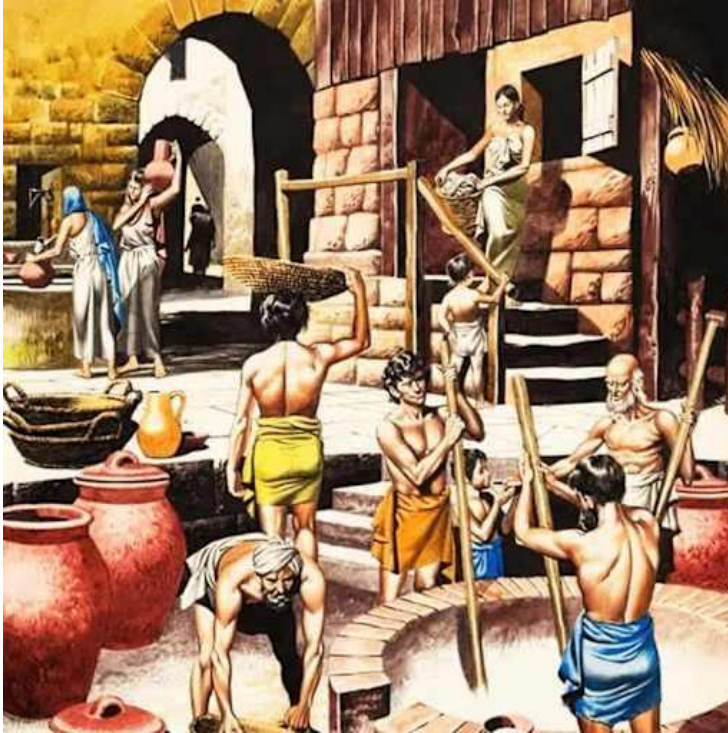


AGRICULTURE

- Farming formed the economic backbone, with **fertile floodplains yielding wheat, barley, peas, sesame, and early cotton using irrigation canals, plows, and crop rotation.**
- Surplus grains stored in massive granaries fed cities and enabled trade.
- **Animal husbandry** included **cattle, sheep, goats, and elephants** for labor and products

Crafts and Industry

- Artisans specialized in **pottery, bead-making from carnelian and lapis lazuli, metallurgy for bronze tools and ornaments, and cotton weaving—the world's first known textile industry.**
- Workshops in cities like Mohenjo-Daro produced **seals, toys, and jewelry for local use and export.**
- These goods showcased advanced techniques like standardized bricks and firing kilns.



Trade Networks

- **Barter trade** thrived internally via **bullock carts and river boats**, and externally with **Mesopotamia** (exporting beads, shells; importing metals), Afghanistan (lapis lazuli), and the Arabian Gulf.
- **Ports like Lothal** handled maritime commerce, while overland routes reached Persia and Central Asia.
- **Seals authenticated transactions**, reflecting organized commerce.



END OF IVC CIVILISATION

- The Indus Valley Civilization, **flourishing around 2600–1900 BCE**, declined gradually rather than collapsing abruptly, with multiple interconnected environmental and societal factors contributing to the abandonment of major cities like Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa.

Climate Change and Droughts

- Severe, prolonged droughts lasting over 85 years each, starting around 4400 years ago, drastically reduced monsoon rainfall by 10-20% and raised temperatures, crippling agriculture dependent on river floods and irrigation.

River Shifts and Floods

- The **Ghaggar-Hakra (possibly ancient Saraswati) and Indus rivers changed courses due to tectonic shifts or sediment buildup**, causing initial floods that buried sites under silt layers up to 30 feet deep, followed by water scarcity as channels moved away from urban centers.
- **Earthquakes in this seismically active zone** likely exacerbated flooding and coastal retreat, disrupting ports like Lothal.

Ecological Degradation

- **Deforestation for bricks and fuel, overgrazing, and soil exhaustion** from intensive farming led to desertification and reduced fertility, weakening the surplus-based economy.
- Combined with declining trade—evident in reduced Mesopotamian contacts—these stresses eroded urban sustainability over centuries.