

**DECAY OF INDUS VALLEY
CIVILIZATION**

The Indus Valley Civilization began to decay between 2000 and 1750 BC. Changing river patterns may have disrupted the agriculture and economy of the region. Overuse of the land along the riverbanks may also have damaged the territory. By approximately 1700BC, the Indus Valley Civilization had disappeared. Some historians consider invaders from central and western Asia to have been the destroyers of Harappan cities, but this View is open to reinterpretation. More plausible explanations are recurrent floods caused by★ tectonic movement, soil salinity and desertification.

Important Findings and Their Sites

Cemetry H: Harappa
Cemetry R 37: Harappa
Coffin burial: Harappa
Two rows of six granaries: Harappa
Stone dancing Nariya: Harappa
Figure of youth whose legs, hands and head are missing: Harappa
Urn burial: Harappa
Person wearing Dhoti: Harappa
Nine-hundred seals: Harappa
Human anatomy figure; Harappa
Vanity box: Harappa
Copper model of carts: Harappa and Chanhudaro
Great bath; Mohenjodaro
Great granary: Mohenjodaro

Naked bronze dancing girl: (Proto-Australoid) Mohenjodaro
Bearded man: Mohenjodaro (Mongoloid)
Seven layers of towns: Mohenjodaro
Ship on seal and terracotta amulet: Mohenjodaro and Lothal
Seals with figures of composite animals: Mohenjodaro One thousand and five hundred seals: Mohenjodaro Woven cotton cloth: Mohenjodaro
Cylindrical seals of Mesopotamia: Mohenjodaro
Ink-well: Chanhudaro
Persian Gulf seal: Lothal
Double burial: Lothal and Rangpur
Terracotta horse figure: Lothal
Horse bone Surkolada
Dockyard: Lothal
Bead making factory: Lothal and Chanhudaro
Fire altars: Lothal and Phendran Kalibangan
Bustrophendian writing style: Kalibangan
Houses opening on the main street; Lothal
Scale: Lothal
Bun shaped copper Ingots: Lothal
Brick chamber grave: Kalibangan
Stone button seal: Mundigak (S.E. Afghanistan)
Limestone male head: Mundigak
Humpless bull seals (common): Harappa
Sun dried bricks (common): Kalibangan
Rhinoceros on seal: Amri.

Cities such as Mohenjodaro, Harappa and Kalibangan had a gradual decline in urban planning and construction of houses made of

old dilapidated bricks; shoddy houses encroached upon the road and streets. Later on, some of the settlements like Mohenjodaro, Harappa were abandoned. However, in most other sites, people continued to live. Some important features associated with the Harappan Civilization such as writing, uniform weights, pottery and architectural style disappeared. These evidences have been interpreted by scholars as indicative of the decline of Harappan Civilization. Earlier, the scholars believed that there was a dramatic collapse of the Indus Valley Civilization. As such, they were looking for some calamity of catastrophic proportions which wiped out the urban communities. The search for the cause of decline of the Harappan Civilization has moved to two directions: (i) That some natural calamity led to the collapse of the civilization and (ii) That it was a barbarian invasion that destroyed it. Scholars have used the evidence of flooding from Mohenjodaro to justify the first point.

Mohenjodaro habitations show at least three instances of deep flooding. There is evidence of deposits of silty clay and layers of collapsed building material mixed with clay which indicates the flooding of the city. Some scholars carried the argument further and related periodic flooding to tectonic uplift of the region. Earthquakes might have raised the flood plains of the lower, Indus River that led to prolonged submergence of cities like Mohenjodaro. It is pointed out that findings at sites like Sutkagendor in the Makran coast indicate

that they were sea ports. However, at present, they are located away from the sea coast. It is known that geomorphologically, the Indus River area is a disturbed seismic zone. It is believed that the upliftment of the coastal areas caused destruction of the Indus cities and disruption of commercial life based on river and coastal communication. Some others suggest that changes in the course of the Indus led to the decline of Mohenjodaro.

Writers like **Mortimer Wheeler** believed that Indus Valley Civilization was destroyed by Aryan invaders. It has been pointed out that in the late phases of Mohenjodaro, there are evidences of massacre. Human skeletons have been found lying on the streets. However, it has been pointed out that Mohenjodaro was abandoned by approximately 1800 BC. Aryans, on the other hand, came to India approximately 1500 BC. Also, Mohenjodaro was in a dilapidated condition.

Therefore, the presence of a few disorderly placed skeletons in the late levels cannot explain the decline which had already taken place. Writers like Water Fairervis have tried to explain the decay of the Harappan Civilization in terms of the problems of ecology. He believes that the Harappan townsmen degraded their delicate environment. A growing population of men and animals confronted by falling resources wore out the landscape. With forest and grass cover removed, there were floods and droughts. These stresses in the end, led to the collapse of the urban culture. The

Decay of Indus Valley Civilization - Study Materials

enduring fertility of the soil of the Indian subcontinent over the subsequent millennia disproves this hypothesis. The urban phase involved a delicate balance of relation between the cities, town, villager, farmer communities and nomadic people. It also meant a fragile but important relationship with the neighbouring groups of people in possession of various minerals crucial for trade. Similarly, it meant the maintenance of link with contemporary civilization. Any breakdown in these chains of the relationship could lead to the decline of cities.

The scholars working on the Indus Valley Civilization no longer look, for the causes of its decline. That is because; they believe that it is a wrong question. Archaeologically, all that seems to have happened was that some of the sites were abandoned and the tradition of literacy seals and sealing were lost. It simply meant the end of the urban phase. Many smaller sites continued to exist. The archaeological findings show a stylistic continuity from the Harappan phase. In fact, in the areas of Rajasthan, Haryana and Gujarat vibrant agriculture communities emerged in larger numbers in the succeeding periods. Thus, from a regional perspective, the period succeeding the urban phase can be treated as one of the flourishing agricultural communities. That is why scholars now talk about cultural change, regional migration and modification of integrated system of settlements and subsistence. After all, no one talks about the end of the ancient Indian

civilization in early Medieval India when most of the cities of the Gangetic Valley declined.

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Comparing Mesopotamia and Indus valley civilization: I

Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley are considered as culturally disparate, with separate philosophical foundations. Distinctive world views and philosophies characterise the people of distinct regions. The Indus culture is seen as non-violent and non-materialistic with a common good behavioural orientation. Animistic views influenced the cultural course taken by the Indus Valley Civilization. Most people lived in small villages. Central organization, planning and construction of large regional centres are evidenced in the Indus Valley. In Mohenjodaro, the largest Indus city, an enormous investment in human energy is manifest in the two massive mud-brick platform mounds, the Citadel and the lower Town. The north-south grid system demonstrates large-scale planning and coordination.

Comparing Mesopotamia and Indus valley civilization: II

Earlier settlement, patterns in Mesopotamia include elaborate public architecture at the centre of each settlement. By the time of

Indus settlement, some economies seem to have evolved related to monument occurrence and the scale and extent of central organization. Successful earlier developments in organization are apparently refined and streamlined. Indus Valley evidence suggests more efficient states regulating larger, more egalitarian and possibly more democratic polities. In the earlier Mesopotamian sequence, rural abandonment and population concentration in walled urban precincts is suggestive of circumscription, competition and intra-regional warfare. In the later Indus Valley sequence, the walled city scenario was avoided. Geographic size may have been difference. The Indus area is far larger. Cultural traits were certainly a factor. Perhaps, the very stable political structure at the Indus village in combination with social-behavioural factors enabled greater stability, longer continuity and more expansive regional integration.

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