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Sanjiv

Refresher

HISTORY

Class-XII

Themes in Indian History
Part I, II & III

For English Medium Students

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HISTORY—CLASS-XII

THEMES IN INDIAN HISTORY : PART-I

1. BRICKS, BEADS AND BONES

The Harappan Civilisation

Chapter Summary

1. The Harappan Civilisation—The Indus Valley Civilisation is also called the Harappan culture. It has been named after Harappa, where this first site of unique culture was discovered. The civilisation is dated between c. 2600 and 1900 BCE. There were earlier and later cultures, often called Early Harappan and Late Harappan, in the same area. The Harappan civilisation is sometimes called the mature Harappan culture to distinguish it from these cultures.

2. Beginnings—There were several archaeological cultures in existence prior to the mature Harappan. These cultures were associated with distinctive pottery, evidence of agriculture and animal husbandry, and some crafts.

3. Subsistence Strategies—Mature Harappan culture developed in some of the areas occupied by the Early Harappan cultures. The Harappans ate a wide range of plant and animal products. They consumed wheat, barley, lentil, chick-pea, millet, sesame and rice. Finds of rice are relatively rare. They also consume meat of sheep, goat, buffalo and pig. Animal bones were found at Harappan sites including sheep, goat, buffalo and pig. They also ate fish.

4. Agricultural Technologies—The Harappans were familiar with the bull. Archaeologists recognize that oxen were used for ploughing. Terracotta models of the plough have been found at many sites in Cholistan and at Banawali (Haryana). Archaeologists have also found evidence of ploughed field at Kalibangan (Rajasthan). According to some archaeologists, the Harappans used stone blades set in wooden handles and metal tools.

5. Mohenjodaro : A Planned Urban Centre—The settlement is divided into two sections; one smaller but higher and the other much larger but lower. Archaeologists designate these as the Citadel and the Lower Town respectively. The Citadel was walled, which meant that it was physically separated from the Lower Town. The second part of the Mohenjodaro, the Lower Town, was also walled. Several buildings were built on platforms. They served as foundations. The settlement was first planned and implemented accordingly. The bricks were in a certain proportion. They were either sun-dried or baked.

6. Laying out Drains—Roads and streets were laid out along an approximate “grid pattern”. It seems that streets with drains were laid out first and then houses were built along them. The waste water of the houses was connected to the drains of the streets. Every house was connected to the street drains. The main channels were made of bricks and were covered with bricks.

7. Domestic Architecture—The Lower Town at Mohenjodaro provides examples of residential buildings. Many of the buildings were centred on a courtyard, with rooms on all sides. The courtyard was probably the centre of activities such as cooking and weaving.

Every house had its own bathroom. Many houses had wells. The total number of wells in Mohenjodaro were about 700. There were no windows on the walls of ground floor.

8. The Citadel—There were many structures on the Citadel in the Mohenjodaro, these included the warehouse and the Great Bath. The warehouse was a massive structure. They and the rest of it are lower portions. The Great Bath was a large rectangular tank in a courtyard surrounded by a corridor on all four sides. There were two flights of steps on the north and south leading into the tank. Across a lane to the north lay a smaller building with eight bathrooms.

9. Burials—The dead were generally laid in pits. Many items were also buried with the dead like pottery, jasper beads, jewellery, shell rings, copper mirror, etc.

10. Looking for Luxuries—Little pots of faience (a material made of ground sand or silica mixed with colour and a gum and then fired) were probably considered precious because they were difficult to make. Rare objects made of valuable materials are generally concentrated in large settlements like Mohenjodaro and Harappa and are rarely found in the smaller settlements.

11. Finding out about Craft Production—Chanhudaro township almost exclusively devoted to craft production. Craft works included bead-making, shell-cutting, metal-working, seal-making and weight-making. The variety of materials used to make beads is remarkable : stones like carnelian (of a beautiful red colour), jasper, crystal, quartz and steatite; metals like copper, bronze and gold; and shell, faience and terracotta or burnt clay. Nageshwar and Balakot were specialised centres for making shell objects. There were made bangles, ladles and inlay things.

12. Identifying Centres of Production—In order to identify centres of craft production, archaeologists usually look for the following : raw materials such as stone nodules, whole shells, copper ore; tools; unfinished objects; rejects and waste material.

13. Strategies for Procuring Materials—Bullock carts were one important means of transporting goods and people across land routes. Riverine routes along the Indus and its tributaries, as well as coastal routes were also probably used.

14. Materials from the Subcontinent and Beyond—Shells were received from Nageshwar and Balakot. Blue coloured very high valued stone lapis lazuli from Shortughai (in far-off Afghanistan), carnelian from Bharuch in Gujarat, steatite from south Rajasthan and north Gujarat and metal from Rajasthan were brought. Lothal was near to these sources. For procuring raw materials may have been to send expeditions to areas such as the Khetri region of Rajasthan (for copper) and south India (for gold).

15. Contact with Distant Lands—Recent archaeological findings suggest that copper was also probably brought from Oman, on the south eastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula. Mesopotamian texts mention that carnelian, lapis lazuli, copper, gold etc. were obtained from Meluhha.

16. Seals and Sealings—Seals and sealings were used to facilitate long distance communication.

17. An Enigmatic Script—Harappan seals usually have a line of writing, probably containing the name and title of the owner. This script remains undeciphered to date. The script was written from right to left.

18. Weights—Exchanges were regulated by a precise system of weights, usually made of a stone called chert and generally cubical. The lower denominations of weights were binary (1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 etc. up to 12,800), while the higher denominations followed the decimal system. The smaller weights were probably used for weighing jewellery and beads.

19. Ancient Authority—Harappan artefacts like seals, weights, bricks, etc. have uniformity. Settlements were strategically set up in specific locations. All these activities were organised by a political authority.

20. Palaces and Kings—A large building found at Mohenjodaro was labelled as a palace by archaeologists. Some archaeologists are of the opinion that Harappan society had no rulers, and that everybody enjoyed equal status. Others feel there was no single ruler but several. Yet others argue that there was a single state.

21. The End of the Harappan Civilisation—By *c.* 1800 BCE most of the Mature Harappan sites in the region such as Cholistan has been abandoned. Possibly the north Harappan sites persisted until after 1900 BCE. The reason for the end of the Harappan civilisation are— 1. climate change, 2. deforestation, 3. excessive flood, 4. drying up of rivers, 5. shifting of river routes, 6. overuse of the landscape, 7. end of the element of uniform integration.

22. Discovering the Harappan Civilisation—In the early decades of the 20th century, Daya Ram Sahani discovered some seals in Harappa. Rakhal Das Banerji discovered some seals from Mohenjodaro. Based on these discoveries, in 1924, the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India, John Marshall, announced the discovery of a new civilisation in the Indus Valley to the whole world.

23. Cunningham's Confusion—When Cunningham, the first Director General of the ASI, began archaeological excavations in the mid-19th century, archaeologists preferred to use the written word (texts and inscriptions) as a guide to investigations. A site like Harappa, did not fit very neatly within his framework of investigation. So Cunningham did not realise how old these were.

24. A New Old Civilisation—Subsequently, seals were discovered at Harappa by archaeologists in the layers that were definitely much older than Early Historic levels. It was then that their significance began to be realised. Now, the world knew not only of a new civilization, but also of one contemporaneous with Mesopotamia.

25. New Techniques and Questions—The major sites of Harappan civilisation are now in Pakistani territory. This has spurred Indian archaeologists to try and locate sites in India. An extensive survey in Kutch has revealed a number of Harappan settlements and explorations in Punjab and Haryana have added to the list of Harappan sites. While Kalibangan, Lothal, Rakhi Garhi and most recently Dholavira have been discovered, explored and excavated as part of these efforts. Since the 1980s, specialists from the subcontinent and abroad have been jointly working at both Harappa and Mohenjodaro.

26. Problems of Piecing together the Past—Material evidence such as pottery, tools, ornaments, household objects, etc. have allowed archaeologists to better understand the Harappan civilisation.

27. Classifying Finds—One simple principle of classification is in terms of material, such as stone, clay, metal, bone, ivory, etc. The second is in terms of function. Sometimes, archaeologists have to take recourse to indirect evidence. Archaeologists have to develop frames of reference.

28. Problems of interpretation—The problems of archaeological interpretation are perhaps most evident in attempts to reconstruct religious practices. Some objects had a religious significance. These included terracotta figurines of women with heavily jewelled. They were regarded as mother goddesses. Some seals have plant motifs and are thought to indicate nature worship. In some seals, a figure shown seated cross-legged in Yogic posture, has been regarded as a depiction of 'proto-Shiva'. Besides, conical stone objects have been classified as lingas.

TIMELINE 1	
Major Periods in Early Indian Archaeology	
2 million BP (Before Present)	Lower Palaeolithic
80,000	Middle Palaeolithic
35,000	Upper Palaeolithic
12,000	Mesolithic
10,000	Neolithic (early agriculturists and pastoralists)
6,000	Chalcolithic (first use of copper)
2600 BCE	Harappan civilisation
1000 BCE	Early iron, megalithic burials
600 BCE-400 CE	Early Historic

(Notes : All dates are approximate. Besides, there are wide variations in developments in different parts of the subcontinent. Dates indicated are for the earliest evidence of each phase.)

TIMELINE 2	
Major Developments in Harappan Archaeology	
Nineteenth century 1875	Report of Alexander Cunningham on Harappan seal
Twentieth century 1921	M.S. Vats begins excavations at Harappa
1925	Excavations begin at Mohenjodaro
1946	R.E.M. Wheeler excavates at Harappa
1955	S.R. Rao begins excavations at Lothal
1960	B.B. Lal and B.K. Thapar begin excavations at Kalibangan
1974	M.R. Mughal begins explorations in Bahawalpur
1980	A team of German and Italian archaeologists begins surface explorations at Mohenjodaro
1986	American team begins excavations at Harappa
1990	R.S. Bisht begins excavations at Dholavira

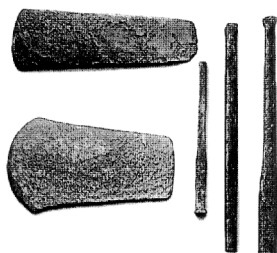
Intext Questions

Page No. 4

Q. 1. Do you think these tools could have been used for harvesting?

Ans.

Archaeologists have also tried to identify the tools used for harvesting. For this, the Harappans used stone blades set in wooden



Wooden Handles

handles or they used metal tools. By looking at these tools, it can be concluded that these tools must have been used for harvesting.

Page No. 4 : Discuss

Q. 2. What is the evidence used by archaeologists to reconstruct dietary practices?

Ans. To reconstruct dietary practices archaeologists used the following evidences—

(1) Finding of Charred Grains and Seeds—Archaeologists have been able to reconstruct dietary practices from the findings of charred grains and seeds. They are studied by archaeo-botanists, who are specialists in