

The Indus Civilization Is One Of The Ancient Civilizations Of The World

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Abstract

The Indus Civilization is one of the ancient civilizations of the world. It was a contemporary civilization of Egypt, Mesopotamia and China. In 1856, while laying the railway lines (tracks) in Sindh, some seals and burnt bricks were discovered. In 1920's Sir John Marshall, the then Director General of Archaeological Department and his colleagues discovered a new civilization. In 1921 Dr. R.B. Dayaram Sahani discovered Harappan site in the Montgomery district of west Punjab which is now in Pakistan. This is situated on the banks of the river Ravi. In 1922 Dr. R.D. Bannerjee took up excavation in the Larkhan district of Sindh and discovered Mohenjo-Daro. Mohenjo-Daro means the 'Mound of the dead' in Sindhi language. Numerous excavations have taken place in the last century at various sites uncovering a lot of information about Indus Civilization. With the partition of the subcontinent a number of major sites are now in Pakistan. Scholars like Sir John Marshall and Dr. Mackey are of the opinion that Indus Civilization belongs to 3000 BCE. The extent of the Indus valley civilization covers from Punjab in the west (present Pakistan) to Uttar Pradesh in the East and from Jammu in the North to river Narmada in the South.

Salient Features:

Town Planning.

Town planning is the unique feature of Indus Civilization. Their town planning proves that they lived a highly civilized and developed life. Indus people were the first to build planned cities with scientific drainage system. The Indus cities were built on a uniform plan. The cities without citadel are found on high mounds.

Streets.

The streets were straight and cut each other at right angles. They were 13 to 34 feet wide and were well lined. The streets and roads divided the city into rectangular blocks. This suggests the existence of street lights. Dustbins were also provided on the streets. These prove the presence of good municipal administration.

Drainage system.

One of the most remarkable features of this civilization is that the city was provided with an excellent closed drainage system. Each house had its own drainage and soak pit which was connected to the public drainage.

The Great Bath.

The most striking feature in Mohenjo-Daro is the Great Bath. It consists of a large quadrangle. In the centre is a great swimming pool of 39ft long, 23ft wide and 8ft deep. The Great bath had 8ft thick outer walls. This solid construction has successfully withstood the natural ravages for 5000 years.

Granaries.

The largest building in Mohenjo-Daro is a granary which is 45.71mtrs long and 15.23mtrs wide. These granaries safely stored the grains, which were probably collected as revenue or store houses to be used in emergencies.

Buildings

People of Indua built houses and other buildings by the side of roads. They built terraced houses of burnt bricks. Every house had two or more rooms. There were also more than one storied houses. They also built a dockyard at Lothal.

Political Condition:

There are no written records. So it is very difficult to assert the kind of administration that existed during this period.

Social Condition:

With the help of the excavations some historians have come to the conclusion that there was a fourfold division of the society based on occupations. They were probably, the Learned class, warriors, Traders and workers. The learned class included priests, astrologers and physicians.

Barley, rice, fruits, vegetables, milk etc. were used. Fish, beef, poultry etc were also used.

They used cotton and wollen clothes. Dice, hunting, fighting, cock fighting, fishing, chess were means of amusements. They knew the art of dancing and music.

They disposed their dead by cremation or burial.

Economic Condition:

Agriculture was the main occupation followed by cattle rearing and dairy farming. They knew the art of irrigation. They grew barley, peas, sesame and cotton abundantly. They reared fine breed of cattle both for milk and meat purpose. They domesticated animals like the buffaloe, bull, sheep, goat, dog, camel and fowl.

Indus people knew the use of weights and measures. Harappa, Lothal, Kalibangan, Rugar, Surkotada and Chanhudaro were the main centers of trade. They carried on their trading activity through barter system. Indus seals, art motifs and their articles have been discovered in West Asia, Egypt and Mesopotemia. A dockyard at Lothal in Gujarat shows that Indus people carried on external trade through ships. Bullock carts, donkeys, and Camels were used for road transportation.

Religious Condition:

Seals, terracotta figurines and images of stones narrate the religious life of Indus people. Mother Goddess was their chief deity. They worshipped Shiva in the form of Pashupati and Linga.

Art and Sculpture:

The seals, figurines, amulets, pottery and the bronze idol of a dancing girl, figures of Pashupati and jewellery are examples of their artistic skills.

Seals and Scripts:

More than 3000 seals made of stone or steatite are found. All of them contain pictorial writing which has not been deciphered to the acceptance of all. But it seems that the direction of writing was right to left. In some cases it was from right to left in the first line and left to right in the second line.

Conclusion:

Thus, Historians have attributed so many reasons for the decline and end of this civilization. The rivers must have changed their course and ruined the cities. The drafting of the rivers away from the cities might have rendered the place unfertile. Continuous floods might have led to the erosion of the soil and destruction of life. Spread of epidemics must have wiped-out the population. The wealth of the Indus might have attracted barbaric invaders putting the inhabitants to their swords.

Recent researches have shown that the decline of the Indus Civilization was not sudden but gradual, may be on account of large scale deforestation leading to frequent floods and consequent ecological imbalance.

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