

# The *Harappan* Civilisation

c.2600-1900 BCE

# Discovery of the Civilisation

- Charles Mason discovered the mounds in 1826
- Next it was visited by Alexander Burnes and Alexander Cunningham
- Cunningham revisited the mounds in 1872 as the Director General of the newly established Archaeological Survey of India
- He was dismayed to find the mounds badly disturbed by railway contractors
- He found within the mounds some stone tools, ancient pottery and a seal with a bull

# Existence of a Civilisation: Excavation of Sites

- Daya Ram Sahni began the excavation of Harappa in 1920
- Rakhal Das Banerjee started the excavation of Mohenjodaro in 1921
- The Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India made the formal announcement of the existence of *Indus* or *Harappan Civilisation* in 1924

# The Pioneers



**Daya Ram Sahni**



**Rakhal Das Bandopadhyay**

# Implications

- Indian history was pushed back to about 2,500 years
- An Indian culture was established that was almost as old as the ancient *Mesopotamian* or *Egyptian* civilisations



# More Discoveries

- Although Mohenjodaro and Harappa stand out by virtue of their size and architectural features, several other *Harappan* sites have been discovered ever since
- Some of these were larger than them like Ganweriwala in Cholistan, Rakhigarhi in Haryana and Dholavira in Gujarat
- Recent excavations at *Harappan* sites reflect a change in approaches, goals and techniques in the field of archaeology



# Extent of the Harappan Civilisation



# Extent of the Harappan Civilisation

- The civilization is marked by its vastness
- Its size varies between 680,000 to 800,000 sq.km.
- Several sites counting to about 1022 have been discovered of which 406 are in Pakistan and 616 in India
- Sites have been found in Afghanistan as well
- Of these only 97 have been excavated so far



# General Features

- The Harappan culture can be divided into early, mature and late phases
- It was an essentially urban culture
- However, all these settlements were not urban, many were indeed rural which supplied food and perhaps also labour to the cities

# Town Planning

- Cities were built according to a plan
- A similarity in city planning can be noted across the breadth of the civilisation
- There was extensive use of burnt bricks, the size of which was the same throughout the culture
- The details of plan differ in the cities both in terms of features and in terms of the level of planning

# Town Planning

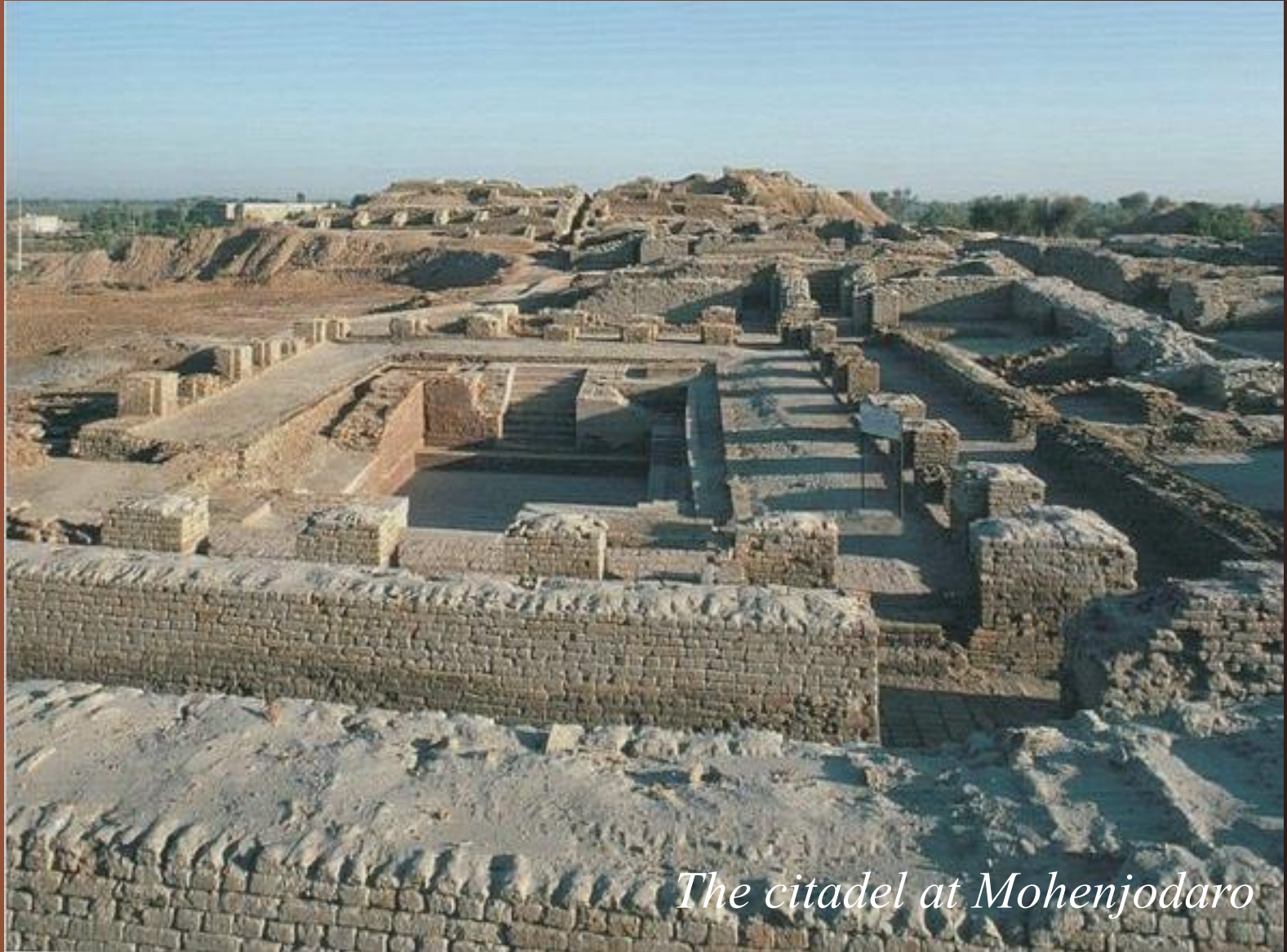
- Every city was divided into two parts, the upper and the lower
- Every settlement had a raised platform like walled structure or citadel
- The citadel could be located centrally (Mohenjodaro), or at one end (to the north in Harappa)
- At Kalibangan two raised mounds can be located
- The citadel complex is not separate at Lothal and Surkotada
- Dholavira consisted of three parts, the upper, the middle and the lower
- The greater architectural structures were located here.



*The citadel at Mohenjodaro*

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*The citadel at Mohenjodaro*



*The citadel at Kalibangan*





*The citadel at Kalibangan*

# Town Planning

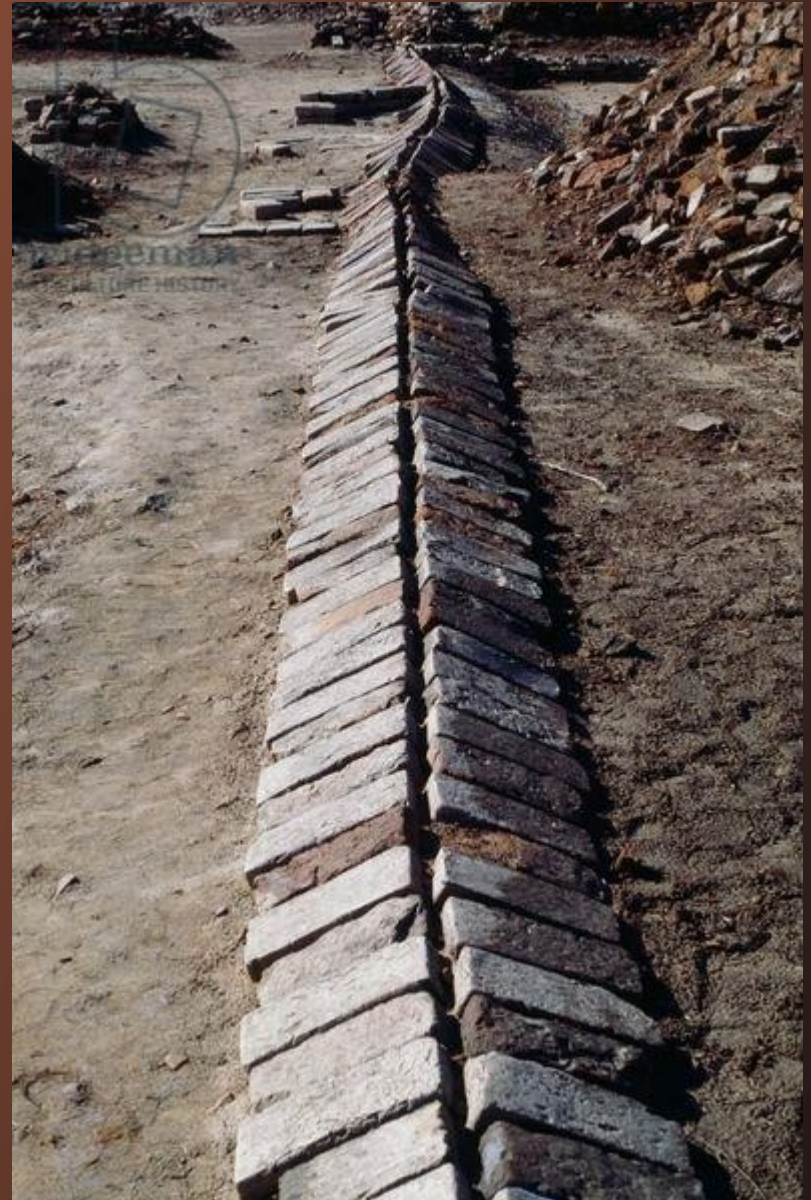


Roads were generally straight and well laid out



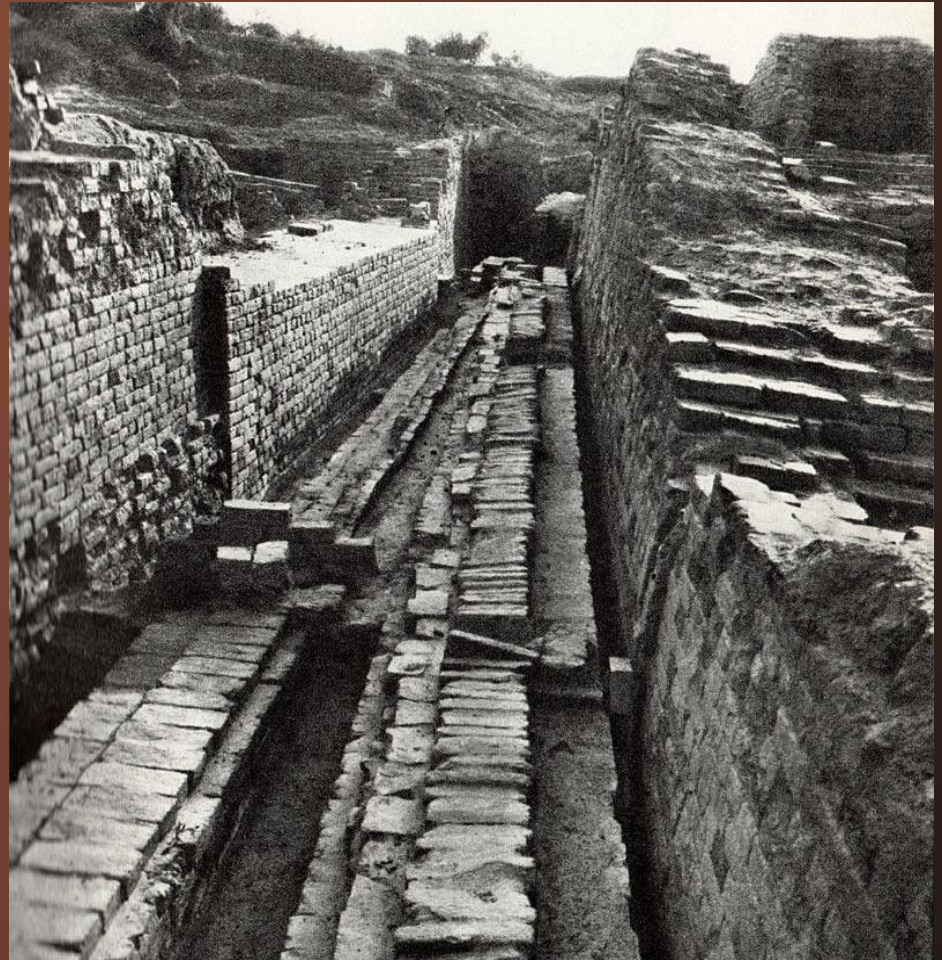
# Town Planning

- The drainage system was well developed
- Covered drains along the roads bear testimony to this fact



# Town Planning

Terracotta drain pipes opened into street drains made of baked bricks at Harappa and Mohenjodaro



# Town Planning

- Houses in cities were built mainly of burnt bricks
- However, dwellings in smaller and rural areas show the use of mud bricks
- In the rocky areas of Kutch and Saurashtra, there was extensive use of stone
- The massive fortification walls with a veneer of dressed stone and the remains of stone pillars of the citadel are distinctive features of Dholavira





Houses in cities were built mainly of burnt bricks





The massive fortification walls with a veneer of dressed stone at Dholavira

# Town Planning

- Both burnt and mud bricks were used for construction of houses
- Doors and windows were made of wood and mats
- Many houses or groups of houses had separate bathing areas and toilets
- Bathing platforms with drains were often located in rooms adjacent to a well
- Elaborate arrangements for water were made for drinking and bathing

# Crafts

- Pottery
- Terracotta figurines
- Stonework
- Copper artefacts
- Gold and silver works
- Seal making
- Bead making
- Shell artefacts
- Cotton and woollen textiles

# Pottery and Terracotta

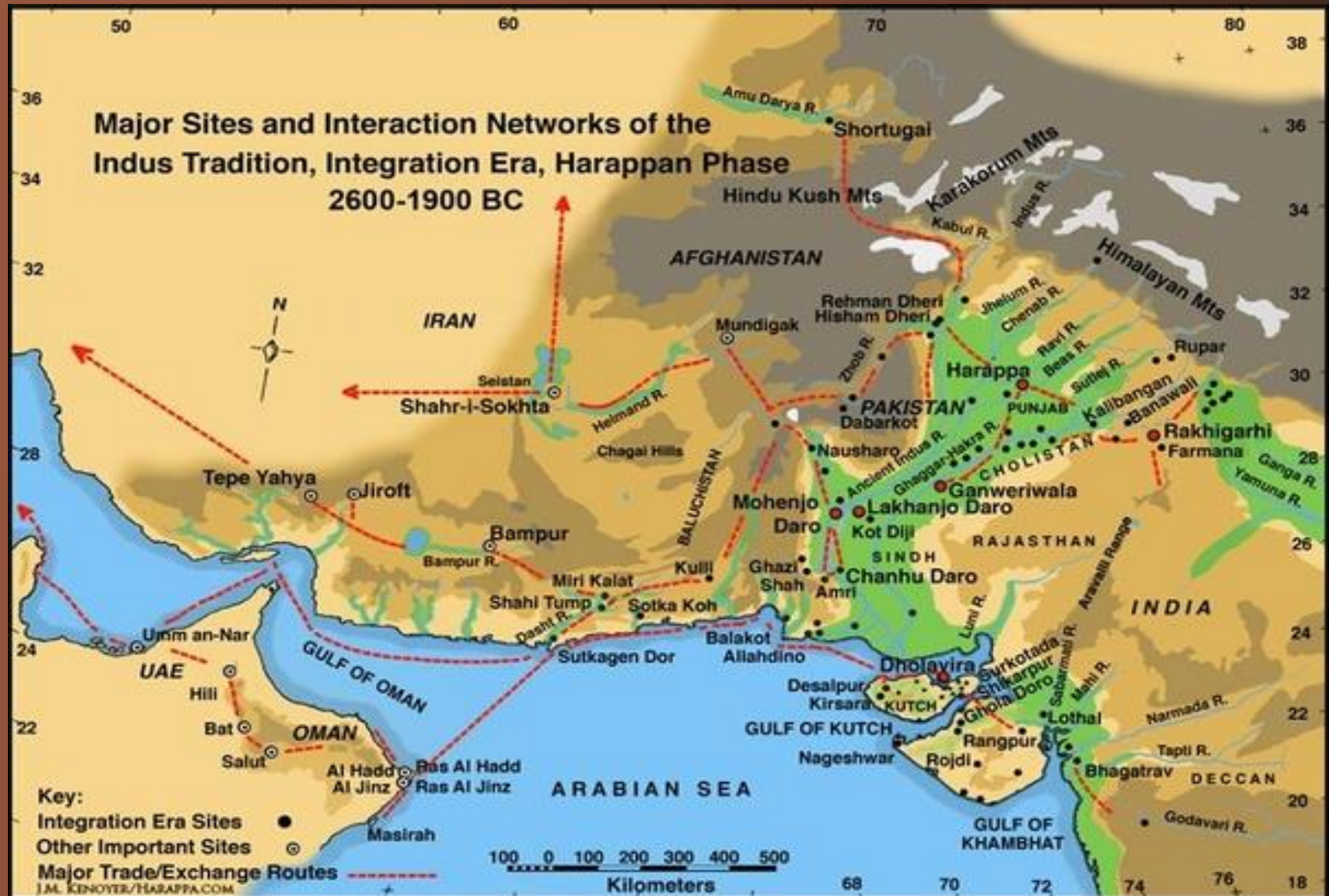






*beads*

# Trade Routes





# Religious Practices

Female goddess?

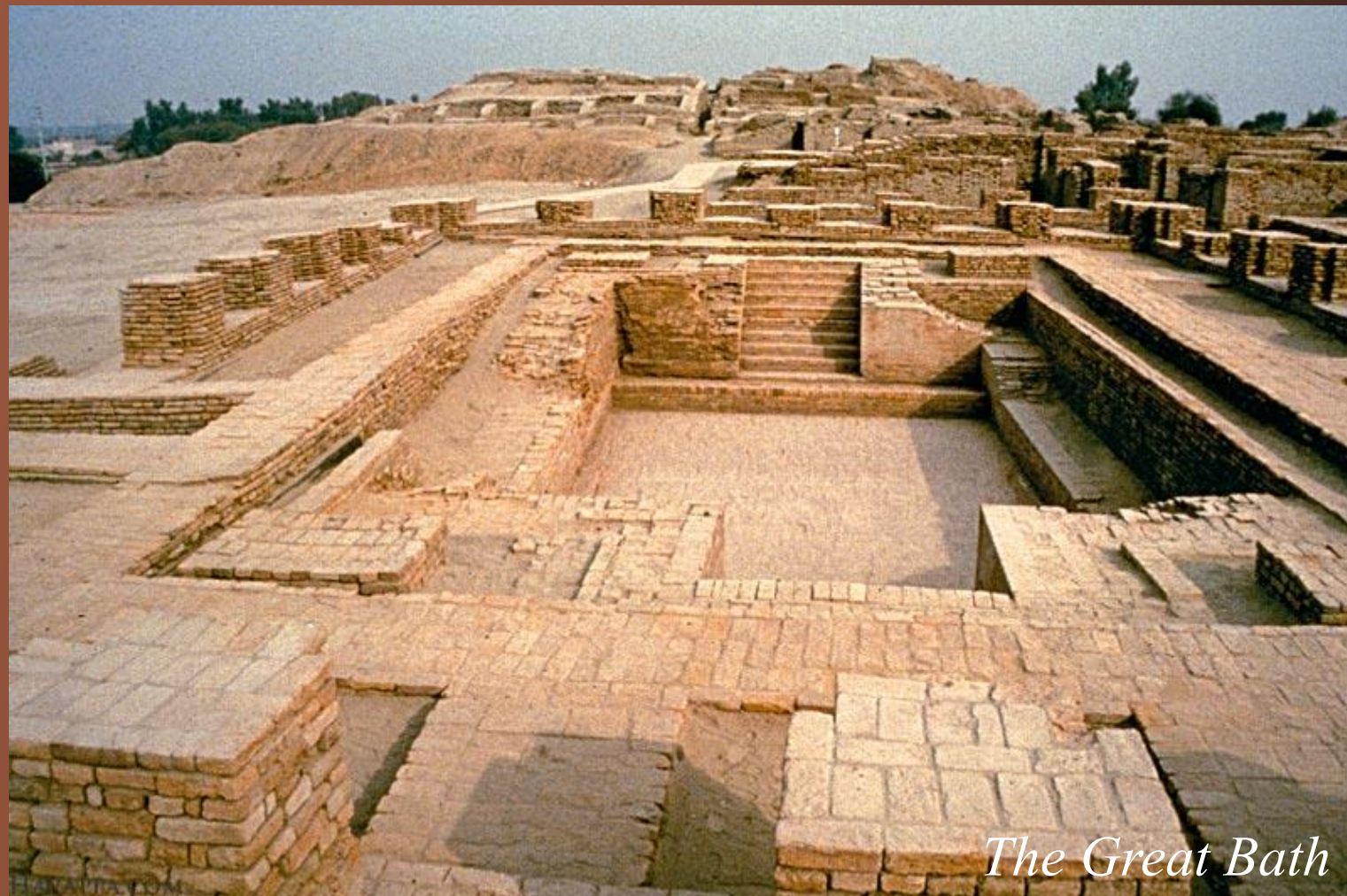


Male god represented in  
the *pasupati* seal?



# Religious Practices

- The Great Bath
- Cemeteries at Harappa, Kalibangan, Lothal, Surkotada
- Fire altars at Kalibangan
- Depiction of mythical animals on seals



*The Great Bath*



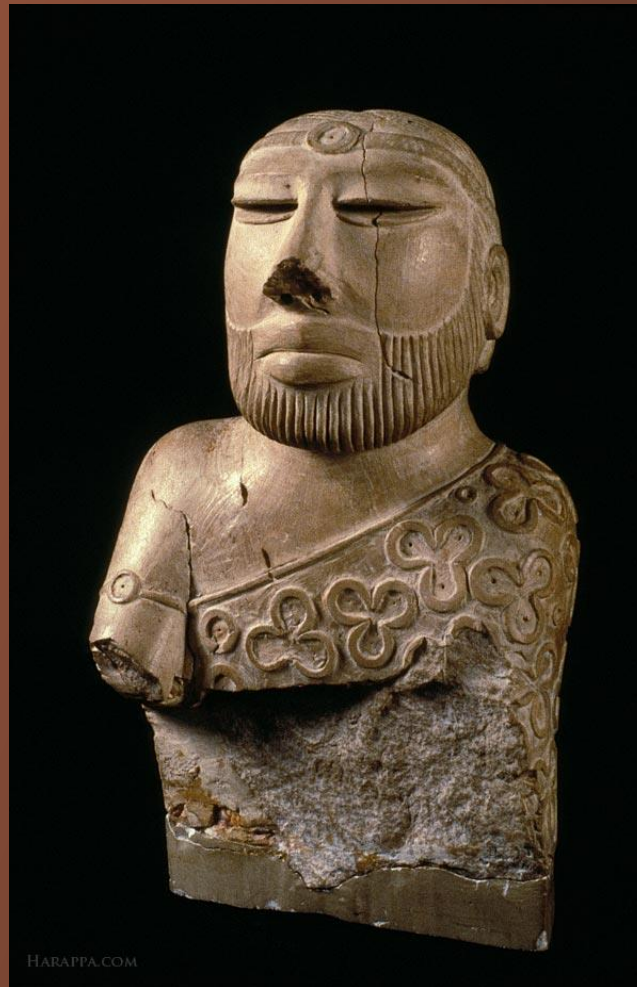


*Fire Altars at Kalibangan*

# The State and Society

- Palace proper theory?
- Priest king?
- Implications of standardisation in several spheres
- Role of mythical symbols on seals

*Priest king?*



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*unicorn seal*

# Decline

- External invasion
- Natural disasters
- Climatic change
- Decline in Mesopotamian trade