The Indus civilization was the earliest known urban culture of the Indian subcontinent, alongside Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt.

It began in the Indus River valley and evolved from villages using Mesopotamian irrigated agriculture.

The two major cities of the Harappan civilization were Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, located in present-day Pakistan.

The civilization's extent reached as far south as the Gulf of Khambhat and east to the Yamuna River.

The nuclear dates of the Indus civilization are approximately 2500–1700 BCE.

Harappa was first identified in 1921 and Mohenjo-daro in 1922.

Mohenjo-daro was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1980.

Vestiges of the civilization have been found as far apart as Sutkagen Dor in Balochistan and Ropar in Punjab, India.

The Indus civilization is known to have included more than 100 towns and villages.

Harappa and Mohenjo-daro were each about 1 mile (1.6 km) square in size.

The population of Harappa was estimated to be between 23,500 and 35,000, while Mohenjo-daro's population ranged from 35,000 to 41,250.

The southern region of the civilization, including the Kathiawar Peninsula, appears to have originated later than the major Indus sites.

The Indus civilization evolved from neighboring villages using a Mesopotamian model of irrigated agriculture.

The civilization successfully managed the annual floods of the Indus River valley while taking advantage of its fertility.

Farming was the primary subsistence method, supplemented by a significant but often elusive commerce.

Crops included wheat, six-row barley, field peas, mustard, sesame, and some of the earliest traces of cotton.

Domesticated animals included dogs, cats, humped and shorthorn cattle, domestic fowl, and possibly pigs, camels, buffalo, and the Asian elephant.

The social and political structures of the Indus civilization remain largely conjectural despite archaeological evidence.

Craft specialization and varied house types at Mohenjo-daro indicate some degree of social stratification.

Trade was extensive and regulated, with Harappan "colonies" established in Mesopotamia and Badakhshan.

Uniformity of weights and measures suggests strong political and administrative control across the region.

The widespread occurrence of inscriptions in Harappan script implies the use of a common language.

Artistic activity in Indus cities provides insights into the lives and beliefs of the civilization's creators.

Stone sculpture is rare and often crude, with figures primarily intended for worship.

Notable bronze artifacts include dancing girls, chariots, and animals, indicating advanced craftsmanship.

Terra-cotta figurines were popular, depicting standing females laden with jewelry and standing males, likely deities.

Some terra-cotta figures represent mothers with children or domestic activities, possibly toys.

Painted pottery indicates a tradition of painting, characterized by boldness and delicacy, but with limited creative scope.

Small seals, often made from steatite, are among the best-known artifacts of the Indus civilization.

Most seals depict a humpless “unicorn” or bull and include scenes with ritual significance.

The seals likely functioned as amulets and practical devices for identifying merchandise.

Copper and bronze were the principal metals used for tools and implements.

Common tools included axes, chisels, knives, spears, arrowheads, small saws, and razors.

Four main varieties of metal have been found: crude copper, refined copper, arsenic copper alloy, and bronze.

Harappan copper and bronze vessels are considered among their finest products, made by hammering metal sheets.

The lost-wax process was used to create figurines of men and animals, showcasing advanced techniques.

Other metals used included gold, silver, and lead, with silver being more common than gold.

Faience was manufactured for beads, amulets, sealings, and small vessels.

Notable beads include etched carnelian and long barrel beads made with exceptional skill.

The pottery of the Indus cities shows evidence of mass production, primarily thrown on a wheel.

A substantial portion of pottery features a red slip with black decoration, often showcasing geometric patterns.

The offering stand, a shallow platter on a tall stand, and a tall cylindrical vessel with perforations are noteworthy vessel forms.

A tall cylindrical vessel, perforated with small holes, remains a mystery in terms of its function.

Fragments of cotton textiles recovered at Mohenjo-daro provide the earliest evidence of cotton cultivation and industry in India.

Raw cotton was likely brought to cities in bales for spinning, weaving, and possibly dyeing.

Stone played a significant role in Harappan material culture, sourced from peripheral quarries.

Stone blades found at Mohenjo-daro originated from flint quarries at Sukkur.

The Harappan script remains undeciphered, making the language unknown.

Recent analyses suggest the Harappan language may relate to the Dravidian language family.

The script was written from right to left and consists of approximately 2,000 short inscriptions.

There are more than 500 signs in the Harappan script, many appearing as compounds.

Various studies, including those by Russian and Finnish teams, have attempted to interpret the script without consensus.

The Harappans used regular systems of weights and measures, including a binary system for smaller weights and a decimal system for larger weights.

The main unit of weight was calculated as 0.8565 grams (0.0302 ounces).

Recent analyses indicate a more complex decimal weight system with specific ratios.

Various scales of measurement were discovered, including a decimal scale of 1.32 inches (3.35 cm) and a bronze rod marked in lengths of 0.367 inch (0.93 cm).

Measurements of structures show that these units were accurately applied in practice.

Certain objects may have been accurately made optical squares used by surveyors to offset right angles.

The uniform material culture of the Indus civilization suggests a closely integrated administration and internal trade.

Evidence of the exportation of objects is limited, but the diffusion of chert blades indicates trade.

Almost identical bronze carts found at Chanhu-daro and Harappa suggest a common origin and trade connection.

The Indus civilization engaged in trade for raw materials with neighboring village communities and forest tribes.

Gold was likely imported from settlements near the goldfields of northern Karnataka.

Copper sources included regions in Rajasthan.

Lapis lazuli and turquoise were probably imported from Iran.

Other materials traded included fuchsite, alabaster, amethyst, and jade from various regions.

The Harappans may have exchanged nondurable goods like cotton textiles and beads for these materials.

Trade with Mesopotamia is supported by literary and archaeological evidence.

Harappan seals were used to seal merchandise, evidenced by clay seal impressions.

Indus seals found in Mesopotamian cities indicate sea trade connections.

Goods sent to Mesopotamia included timber, ivory, lapis lazuli, gold, and luxury items like carnelian beads.

In exchange, the Indus civilization received silver, tin, woolen textiles, grains, and other foods.

Copper ingots were imported to Lothal from a region known as Magan, possibly in Oman.

Mesopotamian trade documents mention Meluhha, the ancient name for the Indus region.

Literary references to Meluhhan trade date back to the Akkadian and Ur III periods, around 2350–1794 BCE.

Direct maritime trade between Meluhha and Mesopotamia likely began in the Early Dynastic Period around 2600 BCE.

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