

## Class VI

### History

#### In The Earliest Cities

#### Handout

#### Module 1/1

#### The story of Harappa

Harappa is one of the oldest cities in the subcontinent. The first excavations at Harappa were led by Rai Bahadur Daya Ram Sahni and by R D Banerji in the early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was the first city to be discovered. All other cities whose buildings were contemporaneous with Harappa were described as Harappan cities.

#### What was special about Harappan cities?

These cities were divided into two or more parts.

1. **Citadel:** The part to the west which was smaller but higher was called the citadel.
2. **Lower town:** The part to the east which was larger but lower was called the lower town.

The walls of baked brick were built around each part. The bricks were so well baked that they have lasted thousands of years. The bricks were laid in an inter-locking pattern, which made the walls strong. In some cities, special buildings were constructed in the citadel. For example, in Mohenjodaro, a very special tank which archaeologists refer to as the **Great Bath** was built in this area. Some cities like Mohenjodaro, Harappa and Lothal had elaborate store-houses.

#### Houses, drains and streets

Most houses had a separate bathing area and some had wells to supply water. Many cities had covered drains. Each drain had a gentle slope so that water could flow through it. Drains in houses were connected to streets and smaller drains; these ultimately led into bigger ones. All three i.e., houses, drains and streets were planned and built at the same time.

#### Life in the city

The Harappan city was a very busy place.

1. **Rulers** were the people who planned the construction of special buildings in the city. Rulers sent people to distant lands to get metal, precious stones and other things that they wanted.
2. **Scribes** were the people who knew how to write and helped in preparing the seals and perhaps write on other materials that have not survived.
3. There were men and women—crafts persons who used to make all kinds of things.
4. Many terracotta toys have been found in Harappan cities. This shows that children must have played with these objects.

#### New crafts in the city

1. Most of the objects that were made and found in Harappan cities were of stone, shell and metal, including copper, bronze, gold and silver.
2. Copper and bronze were used to make tools, weapons, ornaments and vessels.

3. Gold and silver were used to make ornaments and vessels.
4. The Harappans made seals out of stone. These were rectangular in shape, usually having an animal carved on them.
5. The Harappans also made pots with beautiful black designs.
6. Actual pieces of cloth were found attached to the lid of a silver vase and some copper objects at Mohenjodaro.
7. Archaeologists have also found spindle whorls, made of terracotta and faience. These were used to spin thread.
8. Many of the things produced in ancient Harappa appear to have been the work of specialists; they are expertly crafted.

### **In search of raw materials**

Raw materials are substances that are either found naturally or are produced by farmers or herders. Raw materials are processed to produce finished goods. The raw materials that the Harappans used were available locally, whereas many items such as copper, tin, gold, silver and precious stones were brought from distant places.

1. The Harappans probably got copper from present-day Rajasthan and from Oman in West Asia.
2. Tin, which was mixed with copper to produce bronze, had been brought from present-day Afghanistan and Iran.
3. Gold had been brought from present-day Karnataka; precious stones were procured from present-day Gujarat, Iran and Afghanistan.

### **Food for people in the cities**

People living in the countryside grew crops and reared animals. The Harappans grew wheat, barley, pulses, peas, rice, sesame, linseed and mustard.

1. The **plough** was used to dig the earth for turning the soil and planting seeds.
2. Water was stored and supplied to the fields when the plants were growing.
3. The Harappans reared cattle, sheep, goat and buffalo. In the dry summer months, large herds of animals were probably taken to greater distances in search of grass and water.
4. People also collected fruit like *ber*, caught fish and hunted wild animals like the antelope.

### **A closer look – Harappan towns in Gujarat**

The city of Dholavira was located in Khadir Beyt in the Rann of Kutch.

1. This city has freshwater and fertile soil.
2. Dholavira was divided into three parts; each part was surrounded by massive stone walls. Entrances were through gateways.
3. There was also a large open area in the settlement; public ceremonies were held here.
4. Large letters of the Harappan script were carved out of white stone and inlaid in wood.

The city of Lothal stood beside a tributary of the Sabarmati, in Gujarat, close to the Gulf of Khambat.

1. The raw materials such as semi-precious stones were easily available in the city.
2. There was also a store-house in the city.

3. A workshop for making beads, pieces of stone, half-made beads, tools for bead-making and finished beads have all been found here.

### **The mystery of the end**

Around 3900 years ago, we find the beginnings of a major change. People stopped living in many of these cities. Writing, seals and weights were no longer used. Raw materials brought from long distances became rare. In Mohenjodaro, we find that garbage piled up on the streets, the drainage system broke down, and new, less impressive houses were built, even over the streets.

### **Why did all this happen?**

We are not sure. Some scholars suggest that the rivers dried up. Others suggest that there was deforestation. In some areas, there were floods. But none of these reasons can explain the end of all the cities. It appears that the rulers lost control. Sites in Sind and west Punjab (present-day Pakistan) were abandoned, while many people moved into newer, smaller settlements to the east and the south.

### **Points To Remember:**

- Mohenjodaro had the Great Bath, a water-tight tank layered with natural tar. Kalibangan and Lothal had fire altars, where sacrifices may have been performed.
  - Some cities like Mohenjodaro, Harappa, and Lothal had elaborate storehouses.
  - The houses, drains and streets were probably planned and built at the same time. Houses were either single or double- storeyed; some had wells to supply water. Many of these cities had covered drains and well-laid streets.
  - Materials of stone, shell and metal, including copper, bronze, gold and silver have been found. Copper and bronze were used to make tools, weapons, ornaments and vessels. Gold and silver were used to make ornaments and vessels.
  - Pieces of cloth were also found at Mohenjodaro. Craftsmen who specialised in various fields produced many of the things produced here.
  - The Harappans grew wheat, barley, pulses, peas, rice, sesame, linseed and mustard. The plough was used to dig the earth and turn up the soil. Some form of irrigation may have been used. The Harappans also reared cattle, sheep, goat and buffalo.
  - Dholavira was divided into three parts and was surrounded by stonewalls and had gateways for entrance.
  - The possible causes suggested for the decline of the cities are that the rivers may have dried up. Deforestation could have been a factor too. In some areas there may have been floods. It is also speculated that the rulers may have lost control in certain areas leading to unrest and lack of security. This may have compelled the people living there to abandon those areas and move into newer places.
-