

Ancient Civilizations of Asia—India

Section 1



MAIN IDEAS

1. Located on the Indus River, the Harappan civilization also had contact with people far from India.
2. Harappan achievements included a writing system, city planning, and art.
3. The Aryan invasion changed India’s civilization.

Key Terms and Places

Indus River major river in India along which the Harappan civilization developed

Harappa city in ancient India

Mohenjo Daro city in ancient India

Sanskrit the most important language of ancient India

Section Summary

HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION

India’s first civilization was the Harappan civilization, which developed along the **Indus River**. Archaeologists believe Harappan civilization thrived between 2300 and 1700 BC. Harappan settlements were scattered over a huge area, but most lay next to rivers. The largest settlements were **Harappa** and **Mohenjo Daro**. The Harappans may have traded with people as far away as southern India and Mesopotamia.

Why do you think we know so little about the Harappans?

HARAPPAN ACHIEVEMENTS

The Harappans developed India’s first writing system. Although archaeologists have found examples of their writing, scholars have not been able to read it. Most information about Harappans comes from studying the ruins of cities, especially Harappa and Mohenjo Daro. These cities were well-planned and advanced. Each city was built in the shadow of a fortress that could easily oversee the city streets. The streets themselves were built at right angles and had drainage systems. The Harappans also developed beautiful artisan crafts, some of which have helped historians

Why was it an advantage for the streets of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa to be viewed from a fortress?

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draw conclusions about Harappan society. Harappan civilization collapsed by the early 1700s BC, possibly due to invasions or natural disasters.

ARYAN MIGRATION

Originally from Central Asia, the Aryans first reached India in the 2000s BC. Over time they spread south and east into central India and eventually into the Ganges River Valley. Much of what is known about the Aryans comes from a collection of religious writings called the Vedas.

Unlike the Harappans, Aryans lived in small communities run by a local leader, or raja. Aryan groups fought each other as often as they fought outsiders.

The Aryans spoke **Sanskrit** and memorized poems and hymns that survived by word of mouth. People later figured out how to write in Sanskrit. Sanskrit records are a major source of information about Aryan society. Today Sanskrit is the root of many modern South Asian languages.

The early Aryans had a rich and expressive language, but they did not write. How did they preserve their poems and their history without writing?

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Drawing Inferences Write a short essay explaining what you think might have happened to the Harappan civilization.