

Indus River Valley Activity



Indus—Geography

Mountains

- The world's tallest mountains to the north and a large desert to the east helped protect the Indus Valley from invasion and separate it from the most of Asia.
- The mountains guard an enormous flat and fertile plain formed by two rivers—the Indus and the Ganges.

Indus & Ganges Rivers

- The Indus and Ganges and the lands they water make up a large area that stretches 1,700 miles across northern India and is called the Indo-Gangetic Plain.
- Like the Tigris, the Euphrates, and the Nile, these rivers carry not only water for irrigation, but also silt, which produces rich land for agriculture. Each river is an important link from the interior of the subcontinent to the sea. Farming is possible only in the areas directly watered by the Indus.

Challenges

- Yearly floods spread deposits of rich soil over a wide area. However, the floods along the Indus were unpredictable.
- The cycle of wet and dry seasons brought by the monsoon winds was unpredictable. If there was too little rain, plants withered in the fields and people went hungry. If there was too much rain, floods swept away whole villages.

Indus—Language

Writing System

- Historians know less about the civilization in the Indus Valley than about those to the west. They have not yet deciphered the Indus system of writing. In contrast to cuneiform and hieroglyphics, the Harappan language has been impossible to decipher.
- This is because linguists have not found any inscriptions that are bilingual. As a result, historians know very little about their political, intellectual, and religious life.
- About 400 symbols make up the language. Scientists believe the symbols, like hieroglyphs, are used both to depict an object and also as phonetic sounds. Some signs stand alone and others seem to be combined into words.

Archeological Discoveries

- What we know about this civilization mainly comes from evidence from archaeological digs, although many sites remain unexplored, and floods probably washed away others long ago. At its height, however, the civilization of the Indus Valley influenced an area much larger than did either Mesopotamia or Egypt.



Indus—Cities

Background

They built strong levees, or earthen walls, to keep water out of their cities.

Archaeologists have found the ruins of more than 100 settlements along the Indus and its tributaries mostly in modern-day Pakistan.

The largest cities were Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa.

City Planning

One of the most remarkable achievements of the Indus Valley people was their sophisticated city planning.

The cities of the early Mesopotamians were a jumble of buildings connected by a maze of winding streets.

In contrast, the people of the Indus laid out their cities on a precise grid system. Cities featured a fortified area called a citadel, which contained the major buildings of the city.

Buildings were constructed of oven-baked bricks cut in standard sizes, unlike the simpler, irregular, sun-dried mud bricks of the Mesopotamians.

The streets in its grid system were as wide as 30 feet. Walls divided residential districts from each other.

Houses varied in size. Some may have been three stories high. Narrow lanes separated rows of houses, which were laid out in block units. Houses featured bathrooms where wastewater flowed out to the street and then to sewage pits outside the city walls.

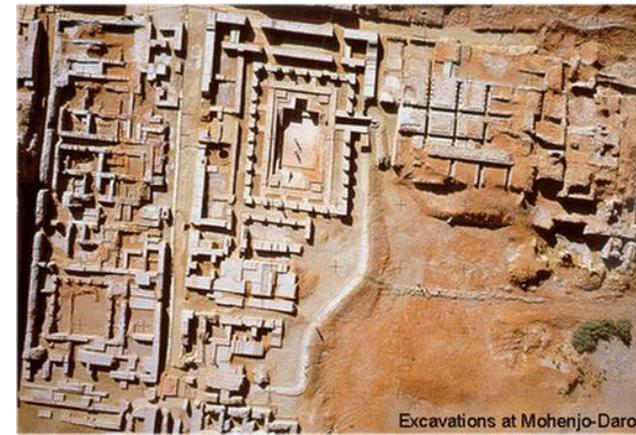
Plumbing

Early engineers also created sophisticated plumbing and sewage systems. By contrast, the Indus peoples built extensive and modern-looking plumbing systems.

In Mohenjo-Daro, almost every house had a private bathroom and toilet. No other civilization achieved this level of convenience until the 19th and 20th centuries.

The toilets were neatly built of brick with a wooden seat. Pipes connected to each house carried wastewater into an underground sewer system.

The uniformity in the cities' planning and construction suggests that the Indus peoples had developed a strong central government.



Excavations at Mohenjo-Daro

Indus Images

