Harappa/Mohenjo-Daro Excavation Inquiry

British engineers made a startling discovery in 1856. The engineers were looking for ballast for a railroad line they were constructing through the Indus River Valley in present day Pakistan. Ballast is crushed rock placed around railroads to drain water away from the tracks. The local people told the engineers of the ruins of an ancient city. The engineers did not understand that the bricks they crushed to make ballast were part of one of the earliest advanced civilization in history. Archaeologists later discovered more than 1000 settlements along the banks of the Indus River. We don’t know what the people ancient people called their cities, but we now refer to the two largest cities as Harappa, after a nearby village, and Mohenjo Daro, a local term that means “hill of the dead.”

Harappa and Mohenjo Daro were expertly planned cities that flourished more than 4500 years ago. The cities were built with a grid pattern of wide, straight streets. Thick walls surrounded the cities. Many people lived in sturdy brick houses that had as many as three floors. Some houses had bathrooms and toilets that were connected to the world’s first sewer system. A canal system provided a reliable source of water for growing wheat and barley. There is also evidence the people herded sheep, cattle and goats.

The ancient people of the Indus River Valley had highly a developed knowledge of mathematics and a sophisticated system of weights and measures. The bricks in different cities are the exact same size. This suggests that the cities may have has the same government. Clay tablets suggest that the people of the Indus River Valley developed a writing system that may be even older than Sumerian writing.

Archaeologists have also found evidence of musical instruments, toys and games, and pottery. The people of the Indus River valley were also very interesting in being clean. Archeologists have found evidence of
combs, soaps, and medicine. The cities were also practicing some form of dentistry because archaeologists found a gravesite with the remains of people whose teeth had been drilled.

The Indus River Valley cities traded with places as far away as Mesopotamia. The people made jewelry from stones. Traders also sold cotton cloth and hard wood from the teak trees that grew in the valley. The Indus River Valley may have been home to more than five million people, but the civilization seems to have been abandoned about 1700BC. It is possible that a great flood weakened the civilization. The moving tectonic plates that created the Himalayas may have caused a devastating earthquake. It is also possible that the people may have been defeated by another culture.

What we know about the Indus civilization is evolving. Archaeologists have excavated only a fraction of the many cities and settlements of the Indus River Valley civilization. We have not yet deciphered their script, but if we do, we may learn a great deal more about the people and culture of the Indus River Valley. In time, we may learn how this amazing civilization developed, how they learned to create an advanced ancient civilization, and why they suddenly disappeared.


Use the following sites to discover the excavations that have been ongoing at these sites for over the past hundred years. Using the sources provided in these websites, give a detailed, documented report on your findings. You will analyze pictures, as if you there, and place the pictures into their appropriate categories. After placing at least 3 pictures into each of their appropriate categories, you will try to evaluate what you have found.

https://www.harappa.com/slideshows
Category #1 – Architecture

Picture 1 - Example

Picture #67 – Stairs leading to the second story, DK-G area, http://www.mohenjodaro.net/ancientstairs67.html

Picture 2 –

Picture 3 –

Evaluation: By examining these pictures and others on the websites what does the architecture tell you about the Indus River Civilization?
Category #2 – Government

Picture 1 –

Picture 2 –

Picture 3 –

Evaluation: By examining these pictures and others on the websites would the Government within the Indus River Civilization work effectively or not?

Category #3 – Culture

Picture 1 –

Picture 2 –

Picture 3 –

Evaluation: By examining these pictures and others on the websites what is important Culturally within the Indus River Civilization?

Category #4 – Language

Picture 1 –

Picture 2 –

Picture 3 –

Evaluation: By examining these pictures and others on the websites how is Language evident and what does it try to tell you about the Indus River Civilization?

Category #5 – Technology

Picture 1 –

Picture 2 –

Picture 3 –

Evaluation: By examining these pictures and others on the websites do you believe that they forms of Technology evident, within the Indus River Civilization, were innovative or diffused?