UNIT 5 HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION-I*

Structure

5.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we are going to understand the formative phase of the Harappan civilization. We will be focusing on the various cultures that laid the foundation of the civilization and study the debate about the factors that led to the rise of the Mature Harappan phase. In this unit, you will be able to learn about:

- the discovery of Harappan civilization;
- the chief characteristics of the Early Harappan culture;
- the extent and the geographical spread of the Harappan civilization;
- the debate among archaeologists on the origins of the Harappan civilization;
- the various regional early Harappan cultures; and
- the transition from the Early Harappan to Mature Harappan.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to study the origin of India's first urban culture: the Indus or Harappan civilization. In the previous units, you have studied the emergence of the first farming cultures in various parts of the subcontinent, particularly, in Baluchistan and Uttar Pradesh. From being hunter-gatherers, humans became food producers, a development encapsulated in the term 'Neolithic Revolution'. The next important stage in the human development is the emergence of cities or urbanization. These settlements were distinct from villages, and were centers of powers or secondary economic activities like trade, crafts and arts. They mark the rise of a more sophisticated civilization and way of living.

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5.2 DISCOVERY

It was in 1924 that John Marshall announced to the world, the existence of an ancient civilization in the Indus valley. In retrospect, he was not the first to come across material associated with this civilization. The first person to come across Harappa was Charles Masson who identified it as an ancient city called Sangala, belonging to the time of Alexander. In 1853-1854, Alexander Cunningham visited the ruins and mistakenly concluded that the site was a Buddhist monastery. He also came across seals associated with this civilization but believed them to be of a foreign origin as they depict a bull without a hump, hence not Indian.

The true significance of the ruins had to await the excavations in the early 20th century. Harappa was excavated in 1920 by Daya Ram Sahni and Mohenjo-daro by Rakhaldas Banerjee in 1921. The similarities in antiquities discovered from the two sites was recognized by Sir John Marshall, who then in 1924 announced to the world, the discovery of the oldest civilization in the subcontinent.

5.3 NOMENCLATURE AND EXTENT

Nomenclature

In the initial years of its discovery, the civilization was known as the Indus Valley civilization. This is because most of sites like Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Allahadino, Chanhudaro were discovered in the Indus valley. After 1947, Indian archaeologists discovered several sites on the Indian side: Lothal, Surkotada, and Dholavira in Gujarat, Kalibangan in Rajasthan; and Banawali and Rakhigarhi in Haryana. Some sites like Shortughai were discovered in Afghanistan. The biggest concentration of sites, nearly 174, was discovered in Cholistan area of Pakistan. These were located near the old bed of the river Ghaggar-Hakra. As many of the new sites were found outside the ambit of Indus valley, it was no longer appropriate to call it Indus Valley civilization. Many scholars prefer the term Harappan civilization, following the archaeological convention of naming a culture where it was first discovered.

Extent

Indus settlements are spread over a wide area which includes India's north-west and Pakistan. Geographically the civilization included more than the Indus zone. It was a combination of riverine lowlands that stretched towards the east and southeast into UP and Rajasthan, the highland and coastal areas of Baluchistan, and the coastal belt of Gujarat (Map 5.1).

The lower part of the Indus valley is noted for being one of the richest areas, and is represented by Sindh. Here is located Mohenjodaro in the Larkana district. In upper Sindh are located the Sukkur-Rohri hills which saw many settlements of workmen in and around the chert quarries. Chert was the principal material which the Harappans used for making blades. Baluchistan in the west encapsulates a varied terrain which was exploited during this time. Makran coast saw the establishment of sites like Sutkagendor and Sotka-Koh which played an important role in the sea trade between the Indus civilization and Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia. These points led to further routes to the interior. In other parts of Baluchistan, settlements were located on arterial routes and agriculturally viable areas. Through these routes Baluchistan's copper, lead, semi precious stones (lapis lazuli, turquoise) could be transported to the settlements in the Indus valley.

Fig. 5.1 Map: Early Harappan Sites. Source: EHI-02, Block 2.

The northern most site of the Indus civilization is Shortughai in northeast Afghanistan. It was through Shortughai that access could be gained to lapis lazuli of Badakshan, and to tin and gold resources of Central Asia. To the northeast of Sind, in the Punjab province of Pakistan, the most prominent site is Harappa located on the banks of the river Ravi. The desert tract of Cholistan region through which river Hakra flows boasts of the largest concentration of Indus settlements. Geographically this tract connects the Indus plains with Rajasthan which has vast copper deposits. Further east is the Indo-Gangetic divide, a transitional area between the Indus and the Ganga river systems. It constitutes the states of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Ghaggar river course in Rajasthan. This region is known for sites like Banawali, Rakhigarhi (as large as Harappa), Kalibangan. Some sites are also located in the most northerly position around Saharanpur in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab. Finally the large area between the Rann of Kutch and Gulf of Cambay saw the emergence of Dholavira in the Rann. Further east in the Saurashtra region was located the important settlement of Lothal. The southern-most extension of this civilization was the site of Bhagatrav on the estuary of the Kim river.

5.4 CHRONOLOGY

The civilization can be dated between 3300 BCE to 1300 BCE with the help of Radio carbon dating. However the dates of individual sites may vary. This entire timeline can be divided into three phases, depending upon the level of

development. These are Early Harappan, Mature Harappan and Late Harappan. A Transitional stage can be placed between the Early Harappan and Mature Harappan. The characteristic of each phase and its rough chronology are summarized below:

Phase	Dates	Important sites	Features
Early Harappan or Regionalization	3300-2600BCE	Harappa, Kot Diji, Amri	Fortification, grid planning, development of incipient trade network and craft specialization
Transitional Phase		Kunal, Dholavira,Harappa	Increasing level of craftspecialization, organized irrigation system, partly standardized repertoire of pottery designs and forms
Mature Harappan or Integration	2600-1800BCE	Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, Kalibangan, Dholavira.	Full scale urbanization, emergence of writing and uniformity in artefacts, full fledged trade
Late Harappan or Localization	Post 1800-1500/ 1300BCE	Cemetery H at Harappa, Siswal, Rojdi, Rangpur.	Decline, and abandonment of some sites, rise of pastoral mode.

5.5 DEBATE ABOUT THE ORIGINS

In the early years of discovery, when Early Harappan level was not yet discovered, there was much debate on whether the civilization had indigenous origins or it developed under foreign influence. Foreign influence was seen in terms of diffusion of ideas or migration of people. The civilization of Mesopotamia was seen as the most favoured candidate for the source of diffusion or migration.

The earliest understanding on the origins was put forward by John Marshall (1931). In his report on Mohenjo-daro, he speculated the civilization to be indigenous in origin, but he couldn't put forward any data to support it. Gordon Childe echoed this opinion. He believed that Harappan civilization was a result of years of patient effort which was characterized by a perfect adjustment of human life to its environment. It shared so many similarities with early India that it was, according to him, 'specifically Indian'. N. G. Majumdar's work at Amri as part of his explorations in Sind in the late 1920s provided credence to Marshall and Childe's theory. At Amri he found an archaeological level with distinctive pottery stratified below its Harappan level and noted the similar stratigraphical profile at a number of Sindh sites. He argued on this basis that the Amri pottery should be looked upon as representing an earlier phase of the Chalcolithic cultures than that represented by Harappa and Mohenjodaro.

Others, on the other hand, strongly believed in the role of Mesopotamia in bringing an urban phase to the subcontinent. E.H. Mackay for instance, argued that the civilization was a result of interaction between invaders from Uruk culture of Mesopotamia and the indigenous people. The opinion in the 1950's was split on

the same lines. Stuart Piggot, supporting Marshall, argued that the civilization had an indigenous origin, although the actual process was not yet understood. M. Wheeler ruled out this possibility. He, too considered the influence of Mesopotamia to be critical, but did not argue for any migration of people. Instead, he argued that since Mesopotamia was first to urbanize, it acted as a model. One of traditions borrowed was that mud-brick architecture and the citadels built with it at Harappa and Mohenjodaro hint at 'alien domination.' Whereas Wheeler's understanding was that the Indus civilization borrowed ideas from Mesopotamia, D.H. Gordon argued that there was an actual migration of people from Mesopotamia. The only issue for him was determining the actual route of migration: land or sea? A similar opinion was given by Heine-Geldern and S.N. Kramer.

From the 1960's we see a gradual change of opinion. F. A. Khan of Pakistan excavated Kot Diji in Sindh in 1955 and 1957. Here he found a fortified citadel complex below the Harappan level of the site. Typical Harappan shapes and motifs such as dish-on-stand, *pipal* leaves, fish scales and terracotta cakes indicated that this earlier level foreshadowed in some important details the later Indus development. Excavations at Amri (1959-62) by J.M. Casal lent credence to Khan's opinion. Excavations began at Kalibangan in 1960s and continued for a decade and unearthed important finds. It brought to light a fortified and planned pre-Indus settlement with an extensive range of pottery. In the same vein, A. Ghosh working in the Ghaggar valley came across at the site of Sothi a pottery which matched the pottery from pre-Indus Kalibangan. He further noted that the pottery at pre-Indus Kalibangan had parallels with corresponding levels at Kot Diji, Harappa and several Baluchistan sites. All these observations led him to postulate for a Sothi substratum of the Indus civilization. He regarded Sothi culture as 'proto Harappan'. F. R. Allchin and Bridget Allchin also argued for the possibility of Harappan civilization being derived from Pre-Harappan culture of the Indus valley itself. In the Indian archaeological literature of the 1960s the frequently used term to describe the discoveries at Kot Diji, Kalibangan and other sites was 'pre-Harappan', a term of mere stratigraphic connotation.

In an unpublished work in 1970-71, M. R. Mughal used the term 'early Harappan' to denote the following characteristics: permanent occupation and elaborate architecture; emergence of administrative centres as suggested by fortification walls; common knowledge and use of copper, steatite and lapis lazuli; uniformity of bone and stone tools; specialized crafts suggesting possible occupational and class stratification; use of wheeled carts; and finally the distribution of identical forms of pottery over a wide area including Baluchistan. He called this phase a phase of 'incipient urbanization' which subsequently crystallized into homogeneous and standardized artefactual remains of the Mature phase. The two key factors which led to this development were intensification of trade with Mesopotamia and increase of population. His study went beyond pottery, with focus on features like architecture, level of craft development, technology, and trade network. He concluded that despite differences, the contemporary cultures shared certain similarities in architecture, artefacts, technology.

From the 1970's the existence of Early Harappan level preceding the Mature phase has become increasingly acceptable. But archaeologists have still not been able to pinpoint the actual factors that led the transition to the Mature Harappan phase.

Ghosh (1965) believed that genius dictators who wanted to compete with Sumerians were behind the transition. The problem with this theory, as rightly pointed out by D.K. Chakrabarti, is that dictators are generally found in more complex class-based societies. The Early Harappan level was not at this level of complexity. Also, it is difficult for any individual to impose this change if the society is not ready for it. Instead, Chakrabarti emphasizes on two new developments that distinguish the Mature Harappan level from the Early Harappan level: (i) increase in the craft specialization, as seen in the increase in the quantity of goods produced, which in turn must be linked with intensification of copper metallurgy (ii) the development of organized irrigation system. These two developments must have created the preconditions for a more complex society which characterizes the Mature Harappan phase. Irfan Habib (2002) has noted the remarkable uniformity in the Mature phase. This could mean that political unification was achieved through warfare. In fact, nearly $3/5^{th}$ of early Harappan sites were abandoned before being reoccupied. Some sites like Amri, Kot Diji, Nausharo, and Gumla were destroyed in fire. It is difficult to ascertain which of the four cultures attempted conquest. Since Harappa was continuously occupied without any destruction, Habib concluded that it must have been the Kot Diji culture that tried to unite all the diverse early Harappan cultures. The only weakness of this argument is that only a small number of weapons have been discovered at the sites. This does not support warfare. Some scholars believe that destruction by fire was a kind of ritual purification done at the sites. It led to rebuilding of the settlements based on a common ideology that laid guidelines on street orientation, water supply and uniformity of materials. Thus, the development of a common ideology might have encouraged the transition to the Mature Harappan.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (×).

   i) The first person to come across Harappa was Charles Masson who identified it as an ancient city called Sangala, belonging to the time of Alexander ( )

   ii) People of the Harappan civilization were aware of the use of iron( )

   iii) It is called the Harappan civilization because Harappa was the first site to be discovered ( )

   iv) We have evidence that the forefathers of the Harappans were living in big cities ( )

2) Write ten lines on the geographical features of the Harappan civilization.

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5.6 WHAT IS EARLY HARAPPAN?

The emergence of Mature Harappan phase was not a sudden development. Its roots lie in the changes seen in the several Neolithic-Chalcolithic cultures in the area that took to food production. You have read in detail about the sites and cultures in the previous units: Mehrgarh in Baluchistan, Gumla and Rehman Dheri in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, and Hakra culture in Cholistan, Punjab, and Haryana. From about 3300 BCE, many of these sites start seeing new developments that were precursor to the Mature Harappan phase. Architecturally, there is the emergence of fortifications, division of settlements into two parts with some evidence of grid planning, use of bricks with the Harappan ratio of 1:2:4, craft production in beads, shell bangles, stone tools and even copper metallurgy. Further, we also see the development of a trade network. In some sites, we see the usage of writing for communication, with many signs resembling the Mature Harappan script. In agriculture, the cropping pattern resembles the one found in the Mature phase.

While many of the sites share these developments, we see important differences in the ware, and slips of the potteries. The difference might also extend to motifs, although there are some shared motifs which also continue into the Mature phase. We also do not see any standardization of crafts, an important feature of the Mature phase. Thus, Jim Shaffer has also called the Early Harappan phase as the regionalization era. The ceramic differences have led archaeologists to classify Early Harappan cultures into four: Kot Diji, Sothi-Siswal, Amri-Nal and Damb Sadaat (Possehl, 2002).

5.6.1 Early Harappan Cultures

Around 3200 BCE, there was a transformation taking place which can be seen in the appearance of four cultures, together covering the entire Indus basin and parts of Baluchistan. These are identified by their distinctive potteries and named after the type site.

1) The Kot Dijian culture occupying the largest area embracing NWFP, Pakistan's Punjab and northern Sindh.
2) Sothi-Siswal culture with settlements in northern Rajasthan, Indian Punjab and Haryana.
3) The Amri-Nal culture found in Baluchistan and Central and Southern Sindh with extensions in Gujarat.
4) The Damb Sadaat phase of Central Baluchistan.

Kot Diji

Kot Diji culture is the most significant of the Early Harappan cultures. It was first identified at Kot Diji in Sindh in 1955 by F.A. Khan. The site was occupied during both Early Harappan and Mature Harappan phase. The Early Harappan level dates back to 3300 BCE. In this phase itself, the site was fortified with the settlement being divided into an upper citadel and a lower town. The fortification was made of mud bricks and stone and was provided with bastions. From inside the settlement were recovered microlithic tools and objects like beads, terracotta toys, cattle figurines, beads, bangles and pottery. The pottery consists of 'well-fired red and buff wares' with common motifs like horned deity, *pipal* leaves and fish scales executed in black (Figure 5.1).

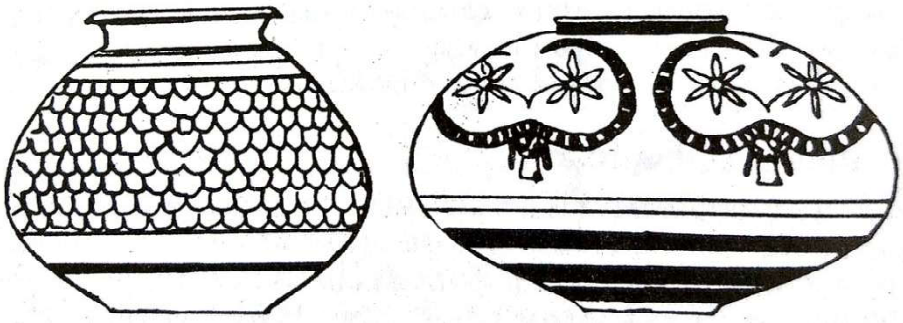

Fig 5.1: Left: Early Indus Pottery: Kot Diji. Right: Early Indus Pottery: Kalibangan

Source: EHI-02, Block 2

The Kot Diji culture was subsequently recovered from several other sites. A major concentration of sites is in Cholistan, while a few sites were discovered from Punjab. In Baluchistan, sites like Mehrgarh and Nausharo have shown some influence of Kot Diji, but their material culture closely resembles Damb Sadaat. According to Possehl, nearly 111 sites of the culture are known with average size of the site being 6.31 ha.

Cholistan: The Kot Diji culture here succeeded the Hakra phase. Most of the sites are located near the dried river bed of Ghaggar-Hakra. 40 sites were reported with an area ranging between 0.1 ha. to 30 ha. The largest of these is Jalwali (22.5 ha.) and Gamanwala (27.3 ha.). Unfortunately, none of these are excavated. However certain important developments could be observed. First, the trend is towards increased sedentarization. This phase sees very less camp sites when compared to the Hakra phase. Second, we see an increase in craft specialization as nearly 14 sites have given evidence of pottery kilns.

The other important sites of Kot Diji culture are:

1) Tarakai Qila, Lewan, Islam Chowki and Lake Largai in the Bannu Basin of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

2) Jhandi Babar, Maru I, Maru II, Ghade Umar Khan, Rehman Dheri and Gumla in Gomal Valley.

3) Rehman Dheri, an important site which has yielded two significant finds: ivory seal and the presence of graffiti on the pottery. These indicate the beginning of a system of communication, and perhaps political control.

4) Saraikhola in Potwar Plateau. The period II is Kot Diji. This level coincides with the introduction of the wheel-made pottery. Other material remains discovered are copper, bangles made of terracotta and shell, stone tools, terracotta cattle figurines and toy carts, and stone beads.

Punjab: The sites where Early Harappan culture is featured is Jalilpur and Harappa. We shall only discuss Harappa. The Kot Diji culture dates back to 2800-2600 BCE succeeding the Neolithic Ravi-Hakra phase. The site is about 20 ha. in size surrounded by a mud-brick wall. The settlement is divided into two sectors, with streets oriented north-south, east-west. The houses are built of bricks in the ratio 1:2:4. In crafts, the site is an important production centre for beads as

the presence of stone drills and flakes of raw material has shown. Popular materials include carnelian, agate, jasper, lapis lazuli, amazonite with beads of agate being used for exchange. Other goods discovered include stone and bone tools, spindle-whorls and ornaments like necklaces and bangles made of shell and terracotta. Among other designs the motifs on the pottery included designs like fish scales, *pipal* leaf, which also occurs in the Mature period. The most important discovery was an early form of Indus script inscribed on a pottery and square seal. Besides, we also discovered a cubical limestone weight.

Sothi-Siswal Culture

The two sites- Sothi in Rajasthan and Siswal in Haryana were excavated in 1955 and 1970 respectively. Both of them revealed identical pottery. In the 1960's, A. Ghosh noted its similarities with the Kot Diji pottery. There are similarities in the motifs but certain important differences exist in shape and surface features. As a result, the Sothi-Siswal culture has been identified as a subculture of Kot-Diji. According to Possehl, around 165 sites of this culture have been identified. These are mainly located in Rajasthan and Haryana with some unexcavated sites like Rohira and Mahorana located in Indian Punjab.

Rajasthan: In Rajasthan, Kalibangan is the most important site (Figure 5.2). This site has given two phases of occupation. Phase I has Sothi-Siswal phase. In this phase, the site was surrounded by a fortification wall. Within the wall, mud-brick houses with a central courtyard were discovered. These were provided with ovens, and lime plastered storage pits. The other antiquities discovered include copper objects, microliths, bangles of terracotta, shell, beads of gold and semi-precious stones. On some of the sherds, some of the signs resemble the Indus script. Towards the south, was discovered a cultivated field with furrow marks. This entire phase is dated to 2900/2800 BCE.

Haryana: Haryana is rich in Sothi-Siswal culture. Besides Siswal, this phase has been observed at Kunal, Balu, Banawali, Rakhigarhi, and Bhirrana. Almost all these sites have given evidence for mud brick structures in the early Harappan level. At Kunal, the proportion was 1:2:3 and 1:2:4 and Bhiranna 1:2:3. In Kunal, the early Harappan site is about 1 ha. in area. Here we have two early Harappan cultures IB and IC. Period IB is classified as Early Harappan due to the presence of Sothi ware in it. But this period did not have any brick made structures. Instead the people lived in wattle-and-daub structures. The brick houses made their appearance in the next phase IC with bricks being in proportion of 1:2:4 or 1:2:3. The houses were also provided with refuse bins and soakage jars. An important discovery in this phase was the collection of silver and gold ornaments in a red ware pot. Also discovered were a large hoard of lapis lazuli micro-beads, 92 agate beads, and faience and carnelian beads. Some data for metallurgy also exists as we discovered a terracotta crucible with molten metal. Other important finds include fish-hooks, arrowheads and spearheads, and flat axes. Rakhigarhi has given data for planned settlement and mud brick structures. Other important artefacts include uninscribed seals, pottery with graffiti, terracotta wheels, carts, rattles, bull figurines, chert blades, weights, a bone point and a muller. The site has given abundant data for cattle bones, which implies importance of animal husbandry.

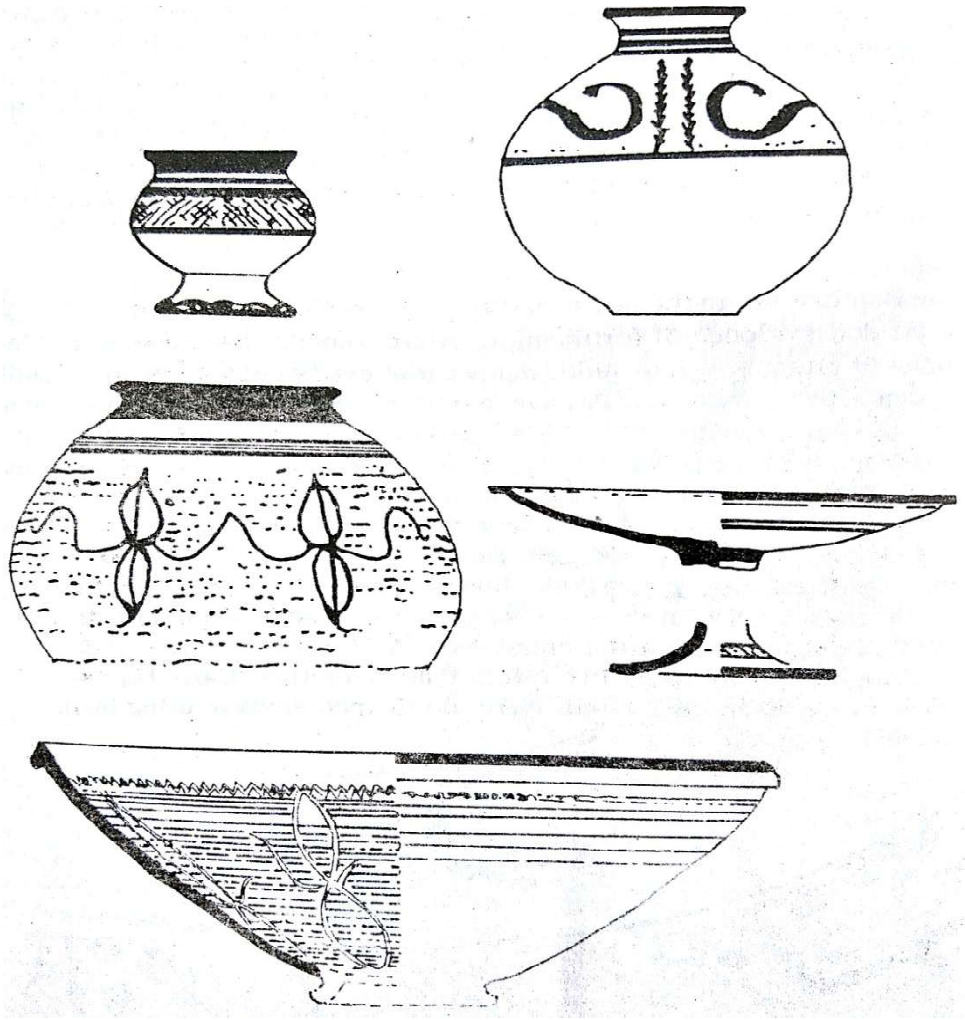

Fig. 5.2: Early Indus Pottery: Kalibangan. Source: EHI-02, Block 2.

Amri-Nal Culture

Another culture designated as Early Harappan is the Amri-Nal culture. The sites of this culture have given a mixed assemblage of two potteries – one discovered at Amri and another at Nal. The sites are found in both Sindh and Baluchistan, with sites in Baluchistan having more of Nal pottery, and sites in Sindh giving us more Amri pottery. The Amri pottery may be described as pottery fired to light red or buff colour and then covered with red or buff slip and painted black. The motifs consist of geometric and curvilinear designs filled with red colour. The Nal pottery, on the other hand, was fired to buff or pink colour, then covered with light buff or red slip, enriching its colour. The designs on the pottery were filled with different colours, making it one of the most beautiful potteries discovered from the subcontinent. The people of this culture seem essentially to be pastoralists migrating to the highlands in summer, and to Indus valley in winter (Possehl, 2003). Nearly 164 sites of the culture are known, with most of them being small camps averaging 3.67 ha. Some of the settlements were also fortified.

Gujarat: A Special Case

Gujarat is considered to be a special case as we have discovered both Amri-Nal and Kot Diji pottery from some of the sites. The Early Harappan phase was excavated at Padri, Kuntasi and Dholavira**.** At Dholavira, two periods I and II have been considered Early Harappan by Bisht. The site right from the start was fortified with the wall made of rubble stones set with mud mortar. The structures

within the fortification made use of bricks in the proportion 4:2:1. In the economic sphere, we can identify copper metallurgy, lithic stone industry, shell-working and pottery. The pottery discovered here shows an affinity to both Amri-Nal sites and Kot Diji. Period II saw further expansion of the site and reinforcing of the fortification with the building of a 2.8 m thick mud-brick wall. The Early Harappan at Padri is dated to 3300-2600 BCE. The site was 3 ha. in area. The inhabitants lived in mud-brick houses and were familiar with copper metallurgy. We also have evidence for pottery kilns and bead production. The pottery discovered here is quite distinct from the other Early Harappan sites. It is a handmade ware having thick dark red slip. The upper level of the period had potsherds inscribed with the Indus script.

Damb Sadaat

On the basis of pottery, Damb Sadaat can be recognized as another sub-culture of Early Harappa. The pottery of this culture too is influenced by Kot Diji, but it has so many distinct plant, animal and geometric motifs that makes it stand out on its own. Possehl (2003) has called it as a localized form of Early Harappan culture**.** Around 37 sites of this culture are known with an average size of 2.64 ha. The largest site is Quetta Miri (around 23 ha.) followed by Mundigak (18.75 ha.). Other important sites are Damb Sadaat and Faiz Mohammad. In addition, it seems that the cultures at the site of Mehrgarh and Nausharo were also influenced by this subculture.

5.6.2 Some Important Observations

Despite the different pottery traditions, many features are found in common in these regional cultures. The first important development is a significant advance in agriculture. The ox was converted into a drought animal. The pre Indus levels at Harappa have given evidence of cart ruts which can be studied along with the cart wheels, cart frames and bulls in terracotta found at Jalilpur (western Panjab) in the Kot Diji period. Besides, at Kalibangan, archaeologists have discovered a field with straight furrow marks which lie below the Mature Harappan debris, leading excavators to assign it to the Early Indus period.

The developments in agriculture led to more yield per head of population. The Early Indus period has given evidence of the cultivation of wheat and barley. For example, at sites like Rehman Dheri and Kalibangan, rabi or winter crops were grown. Sorghum millet (jowar), a kharif or summer crop has been reported from the Sothi-Siswal site of Rohira (Indian Punjab). Ovens including tandoors have been found at Kalibangan in the Early Indus phase, taking the history of bread making in India back to nearly 5000 years.

Wheel made pottery dominates at all the Early Harappan levels. The fine blades at Kot Diji were sourced from the flint of Sukkur Rohri hills in northern Sindh. Copper smelting progressed considerably as shown by the remains of a workshop at Nal (Baluchistan). Both Nal and Kalibangan have yielded beads of steatite and shell which could have reached all the three places through long distance trade.

When one compares the settlements of the preceding Hakra phase, the settlements of Early Indus were larger in size and number and of a more permanent nature. Though the use of burnt brick was rare, mud brick structures are plenty. The

estimated size of Harappa in its Kot Diji levels is 40 ha. Same is the case with Rakhigarhi, a Sothi-Siswal site in Haryana. Possehl estimates that based on the size of 291 early Indus sites, the average size was 4.5 ha, with 34 settlements exceeding 10 ha. Though urban revolution had not reached the majority of the sites but some settlements have attained the status of small townships. Though some seals have been found from Early Indus levels at Kunal and Nausharo, seal findings are limited. Similarly, palaces, or monumental buildings are rare. Defensive walls, a work of rulers have been found at Kot Diji, Kalibangan, Kohtras Buthi (western Sindh) and Rehman Dheri. However one gets the impression of small principalities rather than large powerful states. Funerary rites were practiced at many sites. At the sites of Nal and Damb Buthi in Baluchistan and Surkotada and Nagwada in Gujarat (Amri-Nal culture), we find fractional burials being practiced. At Kot Diji sites of Periano Ghundai and Mughal Ghundai (Northeastern Baluchistan) the dead were first cremated and thereafter their bones were collected and put into pots to be buried.

Concluding Thoughts*:* From the above discussion it is clear that a few distinct archaeological components constituted the Early Harappan phase. These are the following:

1) Fortified settlements and planned arrangement of houses made of standardized bricks.

2) Evidence of grid planning and the division of the settlement in two fortified sectors

3) Partly standardized repertoire of pottery shapes and designs some of which were carried into the Mature Harappan phase. These occur in varying proportion at all the relevant archaeological sites

4) Miscellaneous artefacts like terracotta cakes and painted motifs like fish scale, *pipal* leaf, which continued in the Mature Harappan phase.

5) Several signs of the Mature Harappan script at a few places.

6) Presence of button seals with geometric motifs at some sites.

7) Consolidation and expansion of agricultural life based on the plough all over the Indus Hakra plains. This was combined with the establishment of basic crop types which continued to be cultivated in the Mature Harappan phase.

8) Wide transport and exchange of raw materials.

9) Ritual beliefs embodied in a wide range of terracotta cattle and female figurines.

10) A diversified and well established metallurgical tradition which continued uninterrupted in the succeeding phase.

11) Presence of Indus weights in this level.

12) Finally the unvarying stratigraphical precedence of this level over the Mature Harappan one.

The occurrence of all these features decisively proves that a widely occurring Early Harappan level is the first phase of the Harappan civilization. D.K. Chakrabarti (1999) believes that a common cultural ethos spread with this phase all over the Indus-Hakra plains and adapted itself to the local contexts.

Transitional Phase (2600 BCE)

As mentioned earlier in the unit, we can demarcate three basic stratigraphical profiles of the Indus civilization. These are: Early, Mature and Late forms. Though evidence of transition from the Early Harappan to Mature Harappan is available at some sites, there is an element of abruptness in the appearance of the Mature form especially in terms of writing, multiplicity of art forms and general scale of things. A civilization goes through qualitative changes; however the precise span and process of this transformation needs to be worked out. It is indeed without doubt that a transformation was taking place in the sequence related to the emergence of the Indus civilization. This is clear at three sites: Harappa, Kunal and Dholavira.

At **Harappa**, in the upper levels of the Early Harappan phase the transition to Mature phase is indicated by the construction of the habitation area along a grid of north-south and east-west streets.

At **Kunal**, period IC shows even mud bricks in the classic Harappan ratio of 1:2:4, a well planned drainage system based on soakage pits in the streets, square though uninscribed and knobbed steatite and shell seals, typical classic Harappan copper arrow heads, a number of semi-precious stone beads and gold and silver ornaments containing silver tiaras, armlets and disc shaped beads associated with the Indus civilisation.

At **Dholavira**, Period IV represents classic Indus civilization. However by stage IIIB the basic layout of the settlement was achieved with Harappan elements such as stamp seals, script, weights and many typical pottery forms as well as decorative motifs.

How can the transition be explained? The variable identified by scholars is the increasing level of craft specialization in the transitional phase. This is evidenced in the manufacture of pottery on a commercial scale, the presence of bangles of *Turbinella pyrum* type of shell, blades made of chert sourced from the Sukkur-Rohri hills of upper Sindh in the relevant context at Harappa. Copper metallurgy also developed along the Aravallis (the locale of this tradition comprises the copper bearing areas of north east Rajasthan and its extensions in the Narnaul area of Haryana and tin bearing hills of Tosam area of Haryana). Another variable is emergence of organized irrigation system at this point. Settlements increased in number in the Indus-Hakra plain. This could have been possible only with expansion of an irrigation network. This along with craft specialization and socio-institutional changes, no matter how uncertain, point to the emergence of the Mature phase. For instance, the gold and silver jewellery obtained from Kunal suggests the emergence of an elite class and how at Dholavira multiple divisions of urban space crystallized, point to the possibility that water management and irrigation may have been a socially controlled affair. Thus the emergence of a controlling or ruling nucleus on this basis becomes clear.

Source: D K Chakrabarti, 1999.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Discuss any one Early Harappan culture

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2) Discuss some of the characteristics of the Transitional Phase.

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3) Discuss the debate about the origins of the Indus civilization.

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5.7 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have studied four contemporary archaeological cultures that constitute the Early Harappan level. These cultures saw several important developments that foreshadowed the Mature Harappan phase. Just like the Mature phase, we have the existence of fortified towns, a wide agricultural base, craft production, and rise in trade. These cultures, however, lack the uniformity visible in the Mature phase. Also, there is no usage of writing. The presence of these cultures undoubtedly proves that the origin of the civilization is indigenous, although the actual factors that led to the growth of the Mature phase still elude us. With these points in mind, let's turn our attention to the Mature Harappan phase which is the focus of the next unit.

5.8 KEY WORDS

Artefacts : A thing made by human hand.

Chronology : The method of computing time.

Citadel : The fortress in a city.

Diffusion : This theory argues that any new technology or idea must have originated from one area, and then from there it spread to the rest of the world.

Excavation : The act of digging an ancient site.

Fabric of a pottery : The clay used for making a pottery.

Granary : The storehouse for grains.

Grid planning : A kind of town planning in which the streets intersect at 90º or right angles.

Motifs : Decoration on a pottery.

Nomadism : A way of life associated with cattle herders and

foraging communities. People do not stay at one place but keep moving from one place to another.

Pastoral Nomadism : A social organization associated with cattle and sheep-goat herders who move from one place to another in search for pastures.

Radio Carbon Dating : It is also called C-14 Dating. It is a method of measuring radio-active isotope C-14 in a dead organic sample which disappears at a known and calculable rate.

Slips : A mixture of water and clay applied to decorate the pottery.

Terracotta : A composition of clay and sand used for making statues. It is baked in fire and is reddish brown in colour.

Ware : Set of potteries sharing either fabric or decoration or both.

5.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) i) ✓ (ii) × (iii) ✓ (iv) ×

2) See Section 5.3

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See Section 5.6.1 and Sub sections

2) See the text in Box at the end

3) See section 5.5

5.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

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