

## Ancient civilization : Harappa

### Chronology

The first serious attempt at establishing a chronology for the Indus civilization relied on cross-dating with Mesopotamia. In this way, Cyril John Gadd cited the period of Sargon of Akkad (2334–2279 BCE) and the subsequent Isin-Larsa Period (2017–1794 BCE) as the time when trade between ancient India and Mesopotamia was at its height. Calibration of the ever-growing number of radiocarbon dates provides a reasonably consistent series from site to site. The broad picture thus obtained suggests that the mature Indus civilization emerged between 2600 and 2500 BCE and continued in full glory to about 2000 BCE. Thereafter the evidence is still somewhat unclear, but the late stage of the mature culture probably continued until about 1700 BCE, by which time it is probably accurate to speak of the Post-Urban, or Post-Harappan, stage.

### Extent

All the earlier writers have stressed the remarkable uniformity of the products of the Harappan civilization,

and for this reason they provide a definite hallmark for its settlements. The more-recent evidence suggests that, if the outermost sites are joined by lines, the area enclosed will be a little less than about 500,000 square miles (1,300,000 square km)—considerably larger than present-day Pakistan—and if, as is generally inferred, this cultural uniformity coincided with some sort of political and administrative unity, the size of the resulting “empire” is truly vast. Within this area, several hundred sites have been identified, the great majority of which are on the plains of the Indus or its tributaries or on the now dry course of the ancient Saraswati River, which flowed south of the Sutlej River and then, perhaps, southward to the Indian Ocean, east of the main course of the Indus itself. Outside the Indus system a few sites occur on the Makran Coast, the westernmost of which is at Sutkagen Dor, near the present-day frontier with Iran. These sites were probably ports or trading posts, supporting the sea trade with the Persian Gulf, and were established in what otherwise remained a largely separate cultural region. The uplands of Baluchistan, while showing clear evidence of trade and contact with the Indus civilization, appear to have remained outside the direct Harappan rule.

To the east of the Indus delta, other coastal sites are

found beyond the marshy salt flats of the Rann of Kachchh (Kutch) and in the interior of the Kathiawar Peninsula (Saurashtra). These include the estuarine trading post at Lothal on the Gulf of Khambhat (Cambay), as well as many other sites, some of which are major. West of the Indus River a number of important sites are situated on the alluvial Kachchhi desert region of Balochistan, Pakistan, toward Sibi and Quetta. East of the Indus system, toward the north, a number of sites occur right up to the edge of the Himalayan foothills, where at Alamgirpur, north of Delhi, the easternmost Harappan (or perhaps, more properly, Late Harappan) settlement has been discovered and partly excavated. If the area covered by these sites is compared with that of the Early Harappan settlements, it will be seen that there is an expansion in several directions, along the coast to both the west and the east and eastward through the Punjab toward the Gana-Yamuna Doab.

Cont .....