

Name _____



Indus Valley Civilization

By Vickie Chao

A long, long time ago, there was a group of people called the Aryans. The Aryans were possibly from southern Russia and Central Asia. As nomads, they never liked to linger in one place. Instead, they much preferred to herd their animals by moving them from one spot to another. About 3,600 years ago, the Aryans decided to change their lifestyle. They wanted to give up endless wandering. They wanted to have a permanent settlement that they could call home. When they arrived in India, they did exactly that. As the Aryans learned to adapt to their new environment, they brought with them their religion and customs. Their culture later became the foundation of the Indian culture and led people to believe that it was India's oldest civilization.



That notion changed completely in 1921!

In 1921, archaeologists unearthed two ancient cities - Harappa and Mohenjo-daro - near the Indus River. Both sites predated the Aryans' settlement by about 1,000 years. The discovery, undoubtedly, was a surprise to everybody. Right away, it pushed the Indian history back even further than it already was. Scholars around the world termed the newly found culture "the Indus valley civilization." Some also called it "the Harappan civilization" because Harappa was the first city the archaeologists dug out.

The Indus River lies on the western side of the Indian subcontinent. Today, both the river itself and the two ancient cities fall within the confines of Pakistan. The excavations indicated that people of this ancient culture were excellent city planners. They laid out all the streets at right angles so it was easy for them to navigate. They used same-sized baked bricks to build their homes and equipped each home with a courtyard, private wells, plumbing system, and bathrooms.

They also erected public buildings such as granaries. In terms of economic activities, people of the Indus valley civilization were mostly farmers. They grew rice, peas, sesame seeds, wheat, barley, and cotton. They domesticated water buffaloes to help them plough. They devised complicated irrigation schemes to help them water their crops. People of the Indus valley civilization were not an isolated bunch. Their extensive trading networks even reached the distant lands in the Persian Gulf and Sumer (today's Iraq).

Unfortunately, because there were no extensive records about the Indus valley civilization, we have only scant knowledge of it. Though most scientists believe that people of this ancient culture had their own language and writing system, they have not yet been able to decipher the meanings. Due to the limited information on hand, we don't even know exactly why and when the entire culture disappeared. Some attributed the cause to the Aryans. Some connected it with a climate change. Today, archaeologists around the world continue to flock to Pakistan and India to excavate. Since the groundbreaking discovery in the 1920s, they have unearthed several more cities in the same region. Hopefully, one day, they will find the missing link and unveil the mystery of the Indus valley civilization!

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Questions

- _____ 1. The Aryan civilization was once thought to be the oldest culture in India.
 - A. False
 - B. True
- _____ 2. When was Harappa discovered?
 - A. 1800
 - B. 1921
 - C. 1973
 - D. 1949

