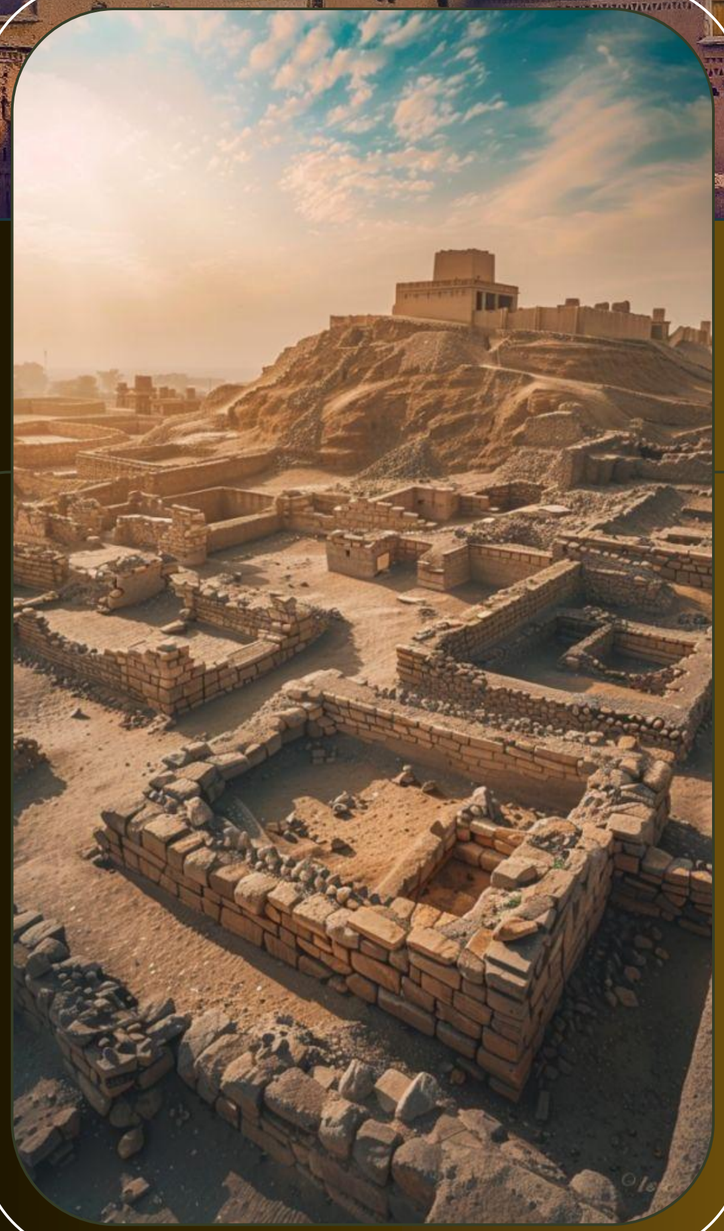
DECLINE OF THE INDUS VALLEY CIVILISATION





Presented by Group 1



INTRODUCTION

- Around 1900 BCE, signs of decline began to appear in the Harappan cities.
- The decline was gradual and varied across regions.
- Major urban centres like Harappa and Mohenjo-daro declined, while smaller settlements continued for some time.
- Environmental changes such as river shifts, reduced rainfall, and floods played an important role.
- Decline in long-distance trade weakened the urban economy.
- Earlier, scholars like Mortimer Wheeler suggested an Aryan invasion based on the Rig Veda, but this theory is no longer widely accepted.
- Most historians now believe the decline was caused by a combination of environmental, economic, and social factors.





ARYAN INVASION THEORY

THEORY (WHEELER'S VIEW)

- Proposed by Ramaprasad Chandra, elaborated by Mortimer Wheeler.
- References in the Rig Veda to forts and "Puramdara" were seen as evidence of invasion.
- Hariyupiya identified with Harappa.
- Skeletal remains at Mohenjo-daro interpreted as massacre.
- Cemetery H culture linked to Indo-Aryans.

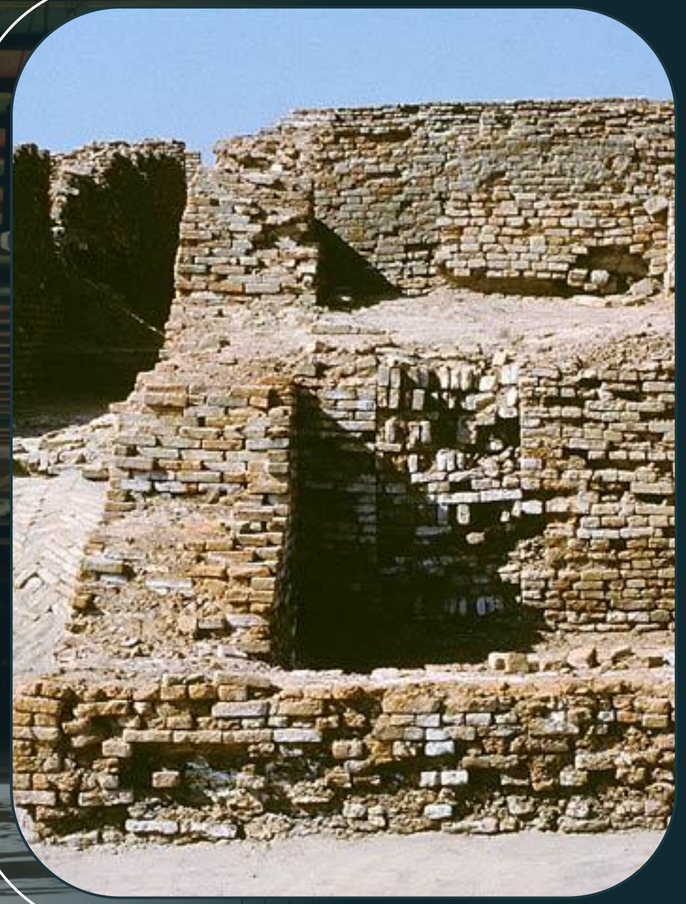
CRITICISM

- Critiques include: George F. Dales, B.B.Lal, P.V.Kane
- No clear archaeological evidence of large-scale violence.
- Skeletal remains were from different occupational levels (not a single event).
- No battle evidence found in the Citadel Mound.
- Kenneth A. R. Kennedy (1997) showed biological continuity.
- A Sterile layer between the mature Harappan phase and Cemetery-H levels
- The Rig Veda is a religious text with uncertain chronology.

CLIMATIC CHANGES THAT LED TO THE DECLINE OF THE CIVILIZATION

•A recent study used archaeology and geoscience technology to explain the civilization’s decline (around 4000 years ago).
•It also examined the debate about the Sarasvati River.
•Scientist Liviu Giosan and his team studied satellite images and sediment samples.
•They found Harappan rivers were mainly monsoon-fed, not glacier-fed.
•When the monsoon weakened, rivers dried up.
•This caused migration eastward, decline of cities, and growth of small farming villages.

•According to the International Journal of History (Dr. Sanjeev Kumar), some scholars link the decline to repeated floods and earthquakes.
•At Mohenjo-daro, thick silt layers show the city was flooded many times.
•People rebuilt repeatedly but may have abandoned the city due to severe floods.
•R.L. Raikes suggested earthquakes raised land levels and blocked the Indus River, causing long-term flooding.
•H.T. Lambrick disagreed, arguing the river would have broken the blockage and floods alone cannot explain the decline of all Harappan sites.





CHANGE IN RIVER COURSES

According to R S Sharma, the environmental factors may have been important. In the Harappan zone, both the Yamuna and Sutlej moved away from the Saraswati or Hakra around 1700 BC. This means a loss of water supply. This ecological shift destroyed agricultural stability, triggered widespread drought, forced migration eastward, and caused urban centres to collapse.

Key aspects of the decline due to water shifts:

- Indus River Shift: The Indus shifted its course away from major cities like Mohenjo Daro by up to 30 kilometres. This movement, likely caused by tectonic activity, deprived the city of its main water source for agriculture and trade.
- Drying of the Ghaggar-Hakra: The disappearance of the Saraswati (Ghaggar-Hakra) river system caused a significant ecological shift. This led to the abandonment of many Harappan sites.
- Weakening Monsoon: A severe, long-term drought, caused by a decrease in summer monsoons, reduced the water supply and forced the population to move towards the Himalayan foothills.
- Resulting Decline: The lack of water led to a decrease in food production and loss of trade, leading to a gradual abandonment of cities

ECONOMIC DECLINE OF THE HARAPPAN CIVILISATION



Shereen Ratnagar on Harappan Decline:

•Decline caused mainly by breakdown of long-distance trade networks, not a single factor like invasion or the environment.
•Harappan urbanism (c. 2600–1900 BCE) depended on agricultural surplus, craft specialization, standardized weights, and organised trade.
•Strong trade links with Mesopotamia & Central Asia; luxury goods (e.g., lapis lazuli, carnelian beads) sustained urban elites and specialised crafts.

Disruption of trade routes led to:

- •Decline in standardised weights & seals
- •Reduced craft quality
- •Economic contraction

•Cities like Mohenjo-daro & Harappa show urban deterioration (poor drainage, decline in planning).
•Environmental changes (river shifts, weaker monsoons) worsened the situation but were not the sole cause.
•Result: Gradual shift from urban trade-based economy to smaller rural settlements — a structural transformation, not sudden collapse.

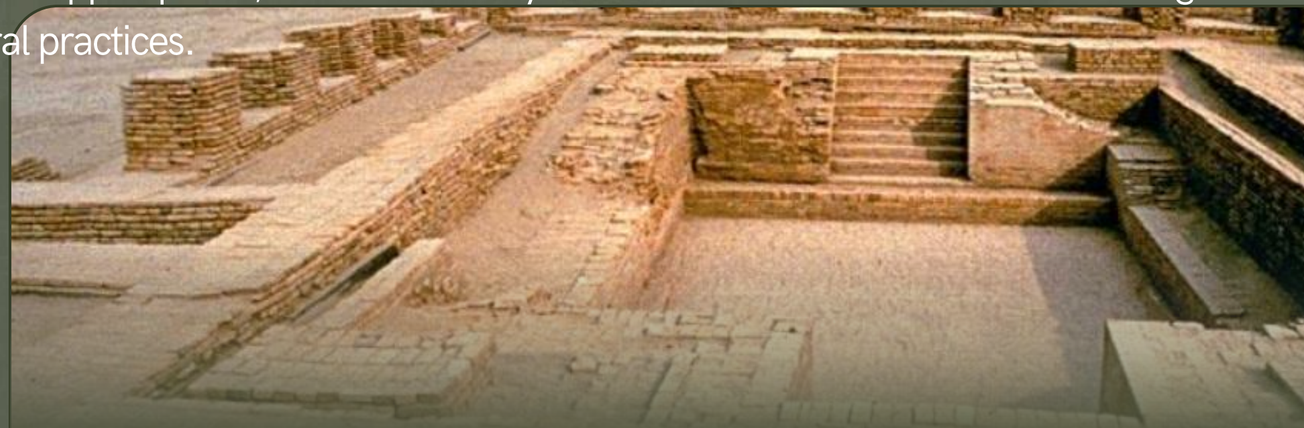
CONCLUSION



In conclusion, the Harappan civilisation stands as the earliest urban culture of South Asia, emerging gradually from the proto-urban Early Harappan phase into a fully developed urban society. Archaeological evidence provides valuable insights into its varied subsistence strategies, flourishing craft traditions, and extensive trade networks. However, due to the script's non-decipherment, many aspects of its religion, social organisation, and political structure remain open to interpretation.

While there was a noticeable cultural homogeneity across the vast Harappan zone, regional diversity also existed, and several Neolithic, Neolithic–Chalcolithic, and Chalcolithic sites contemporaneous with it interacted within this broader cultural sphere.

The civilisation did not end abruptly; rather, the urban phase gradually transitioned into the Late Harappan phase, characterised by the decline of urban features and changes in agricultural practices.



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- Romila Thapar

Contributions

Researcher

1.Shumaila Akhter
2.Mary Doloi
3.Tiyasa Mandal
4.Ashmi Sarkar
5.Ankita Bhattacharya
6.Kriti Pathak
7.Sayani Dey
8.Maria Expedite
9.Sibaangi Mondal
10.Kriti Biswas
11.Debadrita Dey Sarkar

Designer

1.Alisha Shakil
2.Simran Basu
3.Shumaila Akhter

Speaker

1.Ankita Das
2.Simran Basu
3.Omama Akhter
4.Aishani Chakraborty

THANK YOU





Presented by Group 1