

Passage taken from

3. Mohenjodaro A Planned Urban Centre

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Themes in Indian History – I

History Textbook Class XII

Q. Read the following passage carefully

3. Mohenjodaro - A Planned Urban Centre

Perhaps the most unique feature of the Harappan civilisation was the development of urban centres. Let us look at one such centre, Mohenjodaro, more closely. Although Mohenjodaro is the most well-known site, the first site to be discovered was Harappa.

The settlement is divided into two sections, one smaller but higher and the other much larger but Lower Town respectively. The Citadel owes its height to the fact that buildings were constructed on mud brick platforms. It was walled, which meant that it was physically separated from the Lower Town.

The Lower Town was also walled. Several buildings were built on platforms, which served as foundations. It has been calculated that if one labourer moved roughly a cubic metre of earth daily, just to put the foundations in place it would have required four million person-days, in other words, mobilising labour on a very large scale.

Consider something else. Once the platforms were in place, all building activity within the city was restricted to a fixed area on the platforms. So, it seems that the settlement was first planned and then implemented accordingly. Other signs of planning include bricks, which, whether sun-dried or baked, were of a standardised ratio, where the length and breadth were four times and twice the height respectively. Such bricks were used at all Harappan settlements.

3.1. Laying out drains

One of the most distinctive features of Harappan cities was the carefully planned drainage system. If you look at the plan of the Lower Town you will notice that roads and streets were laid out along an approximate “grid” pattern, intersecting at right angles. It seems that streets with drains were laid out first and then houses built along them. If domestic wastewater had to flow into the street drains, every house needed to have at least one wall along a street.

3.2 Domestic architecture

The Lower Town at Mohenjodaro provides examples of residential buildings. Many were centred on a courtyard, with rooms on all sides.

The courtyard was probably the centre of activities such as cooking and weaving, particularly during hot and dry weather. What is also interesting is an apparent concern for privacy: there are no windows in the walls along the ground level. Besides, the main entrance does not give a direct view of the interior or the courtyard.

Every house had its own bathroom paved with bricks, with drains connected through the wall to the street drains. Some houses have remains of staircases to reach a second storey or the roof. Many houses had wells, often in a room that could be reached from the outside and perhaps used by passers-by. Scholars have estimated that the total number of wells in Mohenjodaro was about 700.

(a) On the basis of your reading of the above passage, make notes on it using headings and subheadings. Use recognizable abbreviations (minimum four) and a format you consider suitable. Supply a suitable title to it.

(b) Make a summary of the above passage in about 80 words.

Answer

Harappan Civilisation - Ancient but Urban

1. Mohenjodaro and Harappa were urban centres
 - 1.1. Harappa was discovered first
 - 1.2 Mohenjodaro is better known
 - 1.3 Two sections of Mohenjodaro
 - 1.3.1 Higher & smaller - Citadel
 - 1.3.2. Lower & larger – Lower Town
 - 1.3.3. Citadel & Lower Town separated by a wall
 - 1.4 Settlements were planned
2. Distinctive feature – drainage system
 - 2.1. Rds. & strs. in grid pattern
 - 2.2. Rds. & strs. intersect at right angles
 - 2.3. 1st Strs. with drains then houses built
3. Residential Buildings
 - 3.1. Buildings centred on a courtyard

- 3.2. No windows in ground level
- 3.3. Some houses had stairs for 2nd floor or roof
- 3.3. Each house had its own paved bathroom
- 3.4. Many houses have wells
 - 3.4.1. Wells located in rms.
 - 3.4.2. Rms. with wells can be acc. from outside
 - 3.4.2. Est. no. of wells – 700

Abbreviations

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">1. and - &2. roads – rds.3. streets – strs.4. rooms – rms.5. accessed – acc.6. estimated – est.7. number – no. |
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Summary

Mohenjodaro and Harappa were urban centres of the ancient world. Harappa was discovered first but Mohenjodaro is better known. Two sections of Mohenjodaro were the Citadel and Lower Town, separated by a wall. Distinctive feature was the drainage system. Roads and streets were in grid pattern intersecting at right angles. Houses were built after streets with drains were laid. Residential buildings centred on a courtyard had no windows in ground level and stairs led to the second floor or the roof. Houses had paved bathrooms and wells. The wells, estimated seven hundred, could be accessed from outside.