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| [Ancient Indus Narrative Seal](http://www.harappa.com/indus/34.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) | **Mohenjo-DaroAn Ancient Indus Valley Metropolis** | 1 [2](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/ancientmetropolis.html) [3](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/indusbuildings.html) [4](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/ancientcrafts.html) [5](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/ancientindustry.html) [6](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/indusdecline.html) | [MAIN](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/index.html) |

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|   | [by Jonathan Mark Kenoyer](http://www.harappa.com/indus3/kenoyer.html)  University of Wisconsin, Madison | |
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| [Mohenjodaro City](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/mohenjodarostreet63.html)**Mohenjo-Daro** The name of Mohenjo-daro is widely recognized as one of the most important early cities of South Asia and the [Indus Civilization](http://www.harappa.com/har/har0.html) and yet most publications rarely provide more than a cursory overview of this important site.There are several different spellings of the site name and in this article we have chosen to use the most common form, Mohenjo-daro (the Mound of Mohen or Mohan), though other spellings are equally valid: Mohanjo-daro (Mound of Mohan =Krishna), Moenjo-daro (Mound of the Dead), Mohenjo-daro, Mohenjodaro or even Mohen-jo-daro. Many publications still state that Mohenjo-daro is located in India (presumably referring to ancient India), but since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, the site has been under the protection of the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan. **Discovery and Major Excavations**Mohenjo-daro was discovered in 1922 by R. D. Banerji, an officer of the Archaeological Survey of India, two years after major excavations had begun at Harappa, some 590 km to the north. Large-scale excavations were carried out at the site under the direction of John Marshall, K. N. Dikshit, Ernest Mackay, and numerous other directors through the 1930s.Although the earlier excavations were not conducted using stratigraphic approaches or with the types of recording techniques employed by modern archaeologists they did produce a remarkable amount of information that is still being studied by scholars today (see the [Mohenjo-daro Bibliography](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/mohenjodarobibliography.html)).

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|  | The last major excavation project at the site was carried out by the late Dr. G. F. Dales in 1964-65, after which excavations were banned due to the problems of conserving the exposed structures from weathering.Since 1964-65 only salvage excavation, surface surveys and conservation projects have been allowed at the site. Most of these salvage operations and conservation projects have been conducted by Pakistani archaeologists and conservators. |

In the 1980s extensive architectural documentation, combined with detailed surface surveys, surface scraping and probing was done by German and Italian survey teams led by Dr. Michael Jansen (RWTH) and Dr. Maurizio Tosi (IsMEO).[Mohenjo-daro Mound](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/citadelmound6.html)The most extensive recent work at the site has focused on attempts at conservation of the standing structures undertaken by UNESCO in collaboration with the Department of Archaeology and Museums, as well as various foreign consultants.Details of the most recent salvage excavations and conservation are found in obscure journals or reports that are not readily available to the public, but are listed in the [Bibliography](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/mohenjodarobibliography.html) for those interested in searching them out.

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| [Mohenjodaro City](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/indusriver2.html)**Site Location**The site is located in the semi-arid region of Sindh province, Pakistan, and situated on a Pleistocene ridge that sits like an island in the flood plain of the Indus River.Although the ridge is now deeply buried by the annual flooding that inundated the plain, it may have been more prominent in the prehistoric period, with the early city standing out above the surrounding plain.Eventually through the build up of occupation debris and the construction of massive mud brick platforms, the settlement grew to monumental proportions, with high mounds reaching as high as 12 meters above the modern plain level, and probably much higher above the ancient plain. The site appears to have been located in [a central position](http://www.harappa.com/indus2/161.html) between the two vast river valleys, the Indus on the west and the Ghaggar-Hakra on the east that would have flowed to the east of the Rohri hills. [http://www.mohenjodaro.net/essayimages/indusboat.jpg](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/ancientindianboat95.html)Today the Indus flows to the east of the site and the Ghaggar-Hakra riverbed is dry. The drying up of one river and the shifting of the Indus across the site were undoubtedly major factors contributing to the decline of the ancient city.In its heyday however, Mohenjo-daro would have dominated the riverine trade networks moving from the coast to the northern Indus plain, as well as trade routes leading to the passes in the Bolan Valley to the west. **Site Organization/Settlement Planning**Mohenjo Daro is by far the largest of the Indus cities, extending over 250 hectares with widespread mounds and outlying habitation areas.

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| It is one of the best-preserved urban centers of [the Indus Civilization](http://www.harappa.com/har/indus-saraswati.html) (2600-1900 BCE) and the only other comparable site is Dholavira, Kutch, India.The buildings of Mohenjo-daro are made primarily of fired brick, though some structures do include mud brick and timbers.Mohenjo-daro was spared the looting of bricks that destroyed [Harappa](http://www.harappa.com/walk/index.html) and most sites in the Punjab because the main railroad line was constructed along the east bank of the Indus and crushed rock from the Rohri hills was easily accessible for constructing the rail bed.

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| [Mohenjodaro City](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/greatbathatdawn24.html)**"Citadel" Mound**Excavations in the SD area of the "citadel" mound uncovered a large colonnaded building with a specially designed water tank usually referred to as the ["Great Bath".](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/greatbathatdawn24.html) Just to the south west of the [Great Bath](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/greatbath27.html) is the so-called "Granary," a massive building with solid brick foundations with sockets for a wooden super structure and doorways.The actual function of the building has not been determined because it was excavated by large numbers of local workmen, with no documentation of the stratigraphy or of the precise location of valuable small artifacts.There is no concrete evidence for it being a "granary" and this term should be dropped in favor of "Great Hall". The building was probably a large public structure, but it is not clear if it was a storehouse, a temple or some form of administrative building.

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|  | Two other major buildings with large open areas and colonnades have been labeled the ["Assembly Hall"](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/pillaredhall35.html); (L Area) and the ["College"](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/collegebuildings38.html); (SD Area). The rest of the "citadel" mound is comprised of smaller domestic units, with bathing platforms, wells and small internal courtyards. One portion of the citadel mound has not been excavated because it is covered by a [Buddhist stupa](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/wheelersplatform39.html) dating to the Kushana Period, circa 2nd century CE. Wheeler claimed to have discovered the wall and gateway around the "citadel" mound (Wheeler 1972), but most scholars did not accept his interpretations. |

Although Mackay had tried to locate a wall around the "Lower City" at Mohenjo-daro, he was not successful due to the high water table (Mackay 1938). **"Lower Town"**[http://www.mohenjodaro.net/essayimages/ancienttrench.jpg](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/ancientindiatrench93.html)The "Lower Town" is made up of numerous lower mounds that lie to the east and may represent multiple walled neighborhoods.Earlier scholars thought that the various mounds at Mohenjo-daro represented contemporaneous occupations in a city divided into distinct functional sectors, the western mounds being administrative centers and the lower mounds representing habitation and industrial areas for the common populace.This simplistic interpretation is no longer supported by the available evidence, which indicates shifting centers of power within the city and the presence of habitation and industrial areas in each of the major mounds.Each sector has numerous large brick houses that could have been the mansions of powerful merchants or landowners. No temples have been identified, though there is one building with a double staircase that may have had a ritual function. Other habitation areas are partly buried by the silts of the encroaching Indus River and some Indus brick structures are seen eroding into the Indus River itself. No cemetery area has been located at the site, though there have been reports of occasional chance burials discovered in the course of site conservation.  |  |

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| [Mohenjodaro City](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/ancientsanitation32.html)**Site Chronology**The earliest occupation levels of the site currently lie buried below the water table and date to around 3500 BCE, during the [Kot Diji phase](http://www.harappa.com/indus5/page_385.html) of the Regionalization era (Chaolong 1990).These levels were first discovered in the small-scale excavations at the northwest corner of the western "citadel" mound by Wheeler in 1946 (Alcock 1986).The pottery from the early levels is similar to that found in the Early Harappan (or Kot Dijian) levels of the nearby sites of Jhukar (Mughal 1992) and Kot Diji (Mughal 1970) as well as the site of Amri (Casal 1964). Visitors to the site are most likely to see the remains of excavations carried out by Marshall and Mackay, which focused on the uppermost levels of the city on the "Citadel" mound (SD and L Areas), and the "Lower Town" (HR area, VS area, and DK-G area).The majority of the structures correspond to the final occupation of the [Integration era, Harappa phase](http://www.harappa.com/indus3/e2.html) and the Localization era, Late Harappan phase. Only two radiocarbon dates have been processed from the mixed later levels of the site and these indicate that the final occupation in the HR area of the site occurred between 2200-1900 BCE (Dales 1973).However, the Late Harappan occupation may have continued slightly longer in other areas of the site, since this period is dated to 1700 or even 1300 BCE on the basis of excavations in other regions of the Indus valley.

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| **Environs and Crafts**The ancient city was surrounded by a fertile flood plain suitable for seasonal agricultural and grazing land, abundant wild game and fish as well as considerable wild plant resources.In the absence of extensive irrigation systems this diverse resource base and economic networks linking the cities to regional production centers is thought to have been an important factor in the rise and survival of such large cities.  |  |

[http://www.mohenjodaro.net/essayimages/indusdrain.jpg](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/greatbathdrain31.html)Important crafts were carried out in different sectors of all the major mounds and include [copper working,](http://www.harappa.com/indus/78.html) shell and ivory carving, lapidary and stone tool production as well as many different types of furnaces for the manufacture of [terracotta pottery,](http://www.harappa.com/indus/69.html) stoneware bangles, glazed faience ornaments and [fired steatite beads.](http://www.harappa.com/indus/84.html)[Seal](http://www.harappa.com/indus/31.html) manufacturing workshops have been discovered in very restricted locations indicating strong control of production. The variety of raw materials at the site demonstrates the [vast trading networks](http://www.harappa.com/indus2/161.html) that linked the city to distant resource areas.  |  |

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| [Mohenjodaro City](http://www.harappa.com/indus2/122.html)**Environs and Crafts (cont.)**Although the Indus people did not bury their wealth with the dead, they did occasionally hide valuable ornaments in pots and bury these under the floors of a house. In the course of the early excavations, a few rare discoveries were made of [gold and silver ornaments](http://www.harappa.com/indus/79.html) and silver vessels that provide evidence for a class of wealthy merchants or landowners. Unlike Mesopotamia or Egypt, the Indus elites did not erect stone sculptures to glorify their power, and depictions of warfare or conquered enemies are strikingly absent in representational art. Most of the [art](http://www.harappa.com/indus/79.html) and [symbolic objects](http://www.harappa.com/indus/81.html) were relatively small and in many cases even made in [miniature.](http://www.harappa.com/indus/64.html)

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|  | At Mohenjo-Daro there are stone carvings of seated male figures that may represent some of the ancestral leaders of these communities.One of these fragmentary figures is called the ["Priest-King"](http://www.harappa.com/indus/41.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) even though there is no evidence that either priests or kings ruled the city.This bearded sculpture wears a fillet around the head, an armband, and a cloak decorated with trefoil patterns that were originally filled with red pigment. |

[http://www.mohenjodaro.net/essayimages/seal.jpg](http://www.harappa.com/indus4/326.html)Male and female human figurines as well as animal figurines were made of terracotta, bronze, faience or even [shell.](http://www.harappa.com/indus/86.html) Different styles of ornaments and headdresses on the human figures suggest that many different classes and diverse ethnic communities inhabited the city.The elites of the Indus cities can be distinguished by their use of carved stone seals having animal motifs and writing. They also wore ornaments, such as [bangles](http://www.harappa.com/indus/78.html) and necklaces made of precious metals, rare materials, high fired stoneware or glazed faience.These symbols of wealth and power were what set the rulers apart from the common people, and they also reflect the many different social and [economic levels](http://www.harappa.com/indus/21.html) that were controlled by the rulers.  |  |

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| [Mohenjodaro City](http://www.harappa.com/indus/72.html)**Decline and Transformation**Towards the end of the Indus occupation a slightly different type of pottery, called Jhukar ware was used alongside the more standard Harappa pottery.New styles of geometric seals that did not have writing replace the [inscribed seals](http://www.harappa.com/script/index.html) that were characteristic of the Indus occupation.The transition from one culture to the next was gradual as seen at Harappa, and there is no evidence for invasions by outside communities such as the so-called Indo-Aryans.Although some scattered [skeletons](http://www.harappa.com/indus/71.html) were discovered in the later levels, they do not represent warfare or raiding, and there is no evidence that the site came to a violent end.

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| Various factors contributed to the decline of Mohenjo-Daro.On the one hand, changes in the river flow patterns and correspondent widespread flooding would have disrupted the agricultural base, but did not destroy the city directly. Although there appears to have been a significant break between the end of the Indus occupation and the Early Historic occupation, it is unlikely that the site was ever totally abandoned due to its high position on the plain and the protection it afforded against floods.  |  |

[http://www.mohenjodaro.net/essayimages/Kidsin_DK_4_large.jpg](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/ancientmohenjodaro4.html)There have been some suggestions that the entire site was destroyed by floods (see Raikes and Dales, [Bibliography](http://www.mohenjodaro.net/mohenjodarobibliography.html)) but this theory has not been substantiated by later research.The region around Mohenjo-Daro was inhabited throughout the Early Historic period and numerous historical villages and towns are located near the mound today.  |

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