**Indus Valley - Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro**

**Geography**

The Indian subcontinent is a large, wedge-shaped peninsula that extends southward into the Indian Ocean. This peninsula is surrounded in the north and northwest by huge mountains, which often limited India's contacts with other cultures. Winds called monsoons bring rain every summer. India depended on monsoons to grow their crops.

The Indus River Valley Civilization flourished from around 2500-1500 BC in what is now Pakistan. Archeologists have found remains of impressive cities, but little is known about the civilization that produced them. Like Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley has a hot, dry climate. The floods of the Indus Valley brought water and rich soil to the area, as did the Nile floods to Egypt. Unlike the Nile floods, however, the Indus floods did not occur regularly every fall for long periods. Sometimes it flooded with such force that it destroyed crops and fields. Therefore, the people of the Indus Valley had to dig irrigation ditches and build flood barriers. As in Mesopotamia and Egypt, the population of the area increased. Soon great cities, among them Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, grew from villages and towns. These two cities were laid out in a grid-like pattern, and each city was dominated by a structure built on a hill, probably a fortress of temple.

**Social Structure**

Because scholars cannot yet understand the writing of the Indus Valley people, no one knows what their class structure was actually like. The ruins of Indus Valley houses give little indication of social class. There are few gravesites in which privileged people are buried with costly treasures.

No one knows what life was like for women of the Indus Valley, however, it is possible that if the early Indians worshipped a goddess, then their society may have been matriarchal.

**Political System**

Because they are unable to translate early Indian writings, scholars do not know exactly how the Indus Valley cities were governed. No palaces where monarchs or ruling priests might have lived have been found in the ruins of Indian cities. Nonetheless, scholars believed that like the Sumerian and Egyptian governments, this civilization developed under some strong organizing influence such as councils of businessmen, craftsmen, and farmers. Only under such an influence could the people have built their beautifully planned cities and efficient irrigation systems.

**Economy**

The economies of the early river valley civilizations were all primarily based on agriculture. If crops failed for an extended period of time, the civilizations collapsed. The surpluses of food made possible by faming allowed some people to specialize or do only one kind of work. Some people devoted all their time to making such goods as cloth, pottery, and jewelry. Others became merchants and traded surplus food and manufactured goods for items not available in their area. Eventually, craftwork and trade became as important as agriculture.

Most Indus Valley people were farmers. They were the first to grow cotton and weave it into cloth. Merchants traveled far, trading even with cities of Sumer. Some scholars believe that if the cities declined for economic reasons, their populations may have move away or became farmers in more fertile regions.

**Religion**

Archeologists believe that the people of the Indus Valley were polytheistic, believing in many gods and goddesses. They may have worshipped a nature goddess. They have found female statues similar to the ones mad by the Cro-Magnons. Scholars are fairly sure that the early Indians performed bathing ceremonies. They have found the remains of a great pubic bathing pool in a large building on top of a high mound in Mohenjo-Daro.

**Contributions**

Indus Valley people had a written language called Sanskrit. They built a very advanced plumbing and drainage system in the cities. Sewers under the streets carried off waste and water. Many of the homes had indoor bathrooms. These were connected to the public sewage system by underground pipes. Clay models of carts showed that the Indus Valley people used wheels for transportation. Many of their figurines demonstrate that they were able to manufacture bronze and were skillful at molding it into a variety of shapes.