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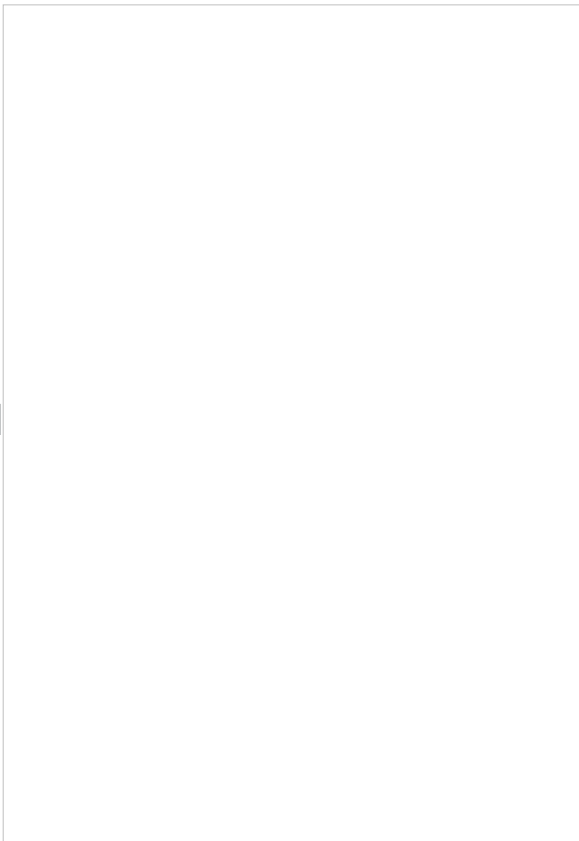
Lothal : India's Oldest Port City

 drishtiias.com/printpdf/lothal-indias-oldest-port-city

(This news analysis is based on the article "In one of India's oldest port cities" by art historian Rana Safvi which appeared in The Hindu on 20th January 2019.)

The word **Lothal**, like Mohenjo-daro, means the mound of the dead. Lothal is located between the **Bhogavo and Sabarmati rivers** near the Gulf of Khambhat in **Gujarat**.

Town Planning of Lothal



- The 4,500-year-old city was **mathematically planned**. It had a grid pattern with proper **streets crossing at right angles** and **drainage systems**.
- The **emphasis on cleanliness** can be judged from the **discovery of toilets and lota-like jars** which shows our fixation with washing up goes back all the way to the Harappan Civilisation.

- The city was divided into two parts: the upper town and the lower town. The remains of the brick walls there suggest wide streets, drains and bathing platforms.

Lothal : City of Trade

- **Rectangular basin** has been found at Lothal that was said to be the **dockyard**. It is 218 m long and 37 m wide and is bound on all sides by **baked bricks**.
- As the Indus script is yet to be deciphered, it is not known if this was really India's first port as is claimed by some and questioned by some historians.
- However, the discovery of Lothal seals in other ancient cities points to its importance in trade that was conducted with other ancient civilisations. The **dockyard proves the maritime activity of the Harappans**.
- Lothal was in the thick of Harappan maritime trade, and beads made from semi-precious stones, terracotta, gold, etc. were popular in areas as far as **Sumer (modern-day Iraq)**, Bahrain and Iran.
- The Lothal bead-makers were highly skilled as hundreds of carnelian beads in various stages of production and tools and raw materials were recovered.

Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC)

- The Indus Valley Civilisation, which is now more popularly referred to as the Harappan civilisation after Harappa, the first of its sites to be excavated in the 1920s by British archaeologist **Sir Mortimer Wheeler**.
- Harappan civilisation emerged on the **banks of the river Indus in the second half of the third millennium BCE** and spread across large parts of western India.
- A marked feature of this ancient civilization was the vivid imagination and artistic sensibilities exuded by the numerous sculptures, seals, potteries, jewellery found at the excavation sites.
- **Harappa and Mohenjo-daro – the two major sites of this civilization** – are among the earliest and finest examples of urban civic planning. The planned network of roads, houses and drainage systems indicate the planning and engineering skills that developed during those times.
- The Harappan Civilisation was widespread as it covered parts of **India, Pakistan and Afghanistan**.
- Thus territorial expansion of such civilization is a logical outcome so as to create different production centres and also promote intra-civilizational exchange.
- Harappan civilisation was unmatched in its spread. Discovery of more than a thousand known sites till date bear testimony to its great expanse.
- Harappan civilisation was a **trade based civilization** which had overseas trade links with Mesopotamia attested by the discovery of Harappan seals there and Mesopotamian carnelian beads here.

Important Sites of IVC

- **Harappa in present Pakistan** – granaries with big platform, stone symbol of lingam and yoni, mother goddess figure, wheat and barley in wooden mortar, dice, copper scale and mirror.
- **Mohenjo-daro in present Pakistan** - bronze dancing girl, the sculpture of bearded priest, the great bath, the great granary.
- **Dholavira in Gujarat** – giant water reservoir, unique water harnessing system, stadium, dams and embankments, inscription comprising 10 large sized signs like an advertisement board.
- **Lothal (Manchester of Indus Valley Civilisation) in Gujarat** – dockyard, double burial, risk husk, fire altars, painted jar, modern day chess, terracotta figure of ship, instruments for measuring 45, 90 and 180-degree angles.
- **Ropar in Punjab** – dog buried with human oval pit burials.
- **Balathal and Kalibangan in Rajasthan** – bangle factory, toy carts, bones of camel, decorated bricks, citadel and lower town.
- **Banawali in Haryana** – toy plough, barley grains, oval-shaped settlement, the only city with radial streets.
- **Alamgirpur in Uttar Pradesh** – impression of a cloth on a trough.