

The Lost City of Mohenjo-Daro

A

Hidden beneath the sun-scorched plains of modern-day Pakistan, Mohenjo-Daro is one of the most enigmatic urban centers of the ancient world. Located in the Sindh province along the banks of the Indus River, the city was part of the Indus Valley Civilization, which flourished between 2600 and 1900 BCE. Although rediscovered in the 1920s, much about Mohenjo-Daro remains shrouded in mystery, from its language and governance to the reasons for its sudden disappearance. Yet, its layout and artifacts suggest a remarkably advanced society with sophisticated urban planning.

B

The site was first excavated in 1922 by R.D. Banerji, an officer of the Archaeological Survey of India, who recognized the distinctive brickwork and mound formations. Soon after, British archaeologist John Marshall led a more extensive excavation effort. What they uncovered astonished the world: a grid-patterned city with wide streets, complex drainage systems, wells, and standardized fired bricks. Unlike other ancient urban centers, Mohenjo-Daro lacked palaces or grand temples, leading some researchers to propose a more egalitarian societal structure. The Great Bath, a large public water tank, is one of the most iconic features of the site, possibly used for ritual purification.

C

Artifacts found at the site suggest a vibrant cultural and economic life. Beads, weights, seals, pottery, and figurines all indicate craft specialization and trade. Some of the seals are engraved with a script that remains undeciphered, often featuring animal motifs and abstract symbols. These

inscriptions provide tantalizing glimpses into the language and communication system of the Indus Valley people, but without a bilingual key—like the Rosetta Stone for Egyptian hieroglyphs—their meanings remain speculative. Despite extensive analysis, the linguistic structure and phonetics of the script are still unknown, making it one of the great unresolved puzzles of archaeology.

D

Equally puzzling is the city's abandonment. Sometime around 1900 BCE, Mohenjo-Daro was deserted along with other major settlements of the Indus Valley. Theories abound: changing river courses, declining trade, environmental degradation, and even invasion have all been suggested. However, there is little evidence of widespread destruction. Some experts now believe a gradual decline rather than a sudden catastrophe may explain the city's fate. The climatic shifts that led to reduced monsoon rains and agricultural yields could have rendered the area unsustainable for large populations.

E

Despite its historical importance, Mohenjo-Daro faces numerous threats today. The site is vulnerable to seasonal flooding and waterlogging, and the bricks have deteriorated due to salt crystallization and improper conservation techniques. Human activity—both from tourism and local encroachment—has also taken a toll. UNESCO designated Mohenjo-Daro as a World Heritage Site in 1980, yet efforts to preserve it have been hampered by political instability and limited funding. Conservationists warn that unless urgent action is taken, one of humanity's earliest cities could be lost once again—this time permanently.

F

What Mohenjo-Daro offers is more than archaeological fascination—it provides a glimpse into a complex urban society that thrived independently of other ancient civilizations like those of Mesopotamia and Egypt. The city's lack of obvious hierarchical structures, its standardized city planning, and the sheer scale of its infrastructure hint at a society that may have operated on different political and economic principles than previously known ancient cultures. As scholars continue to study its ruins, Mohenjo-Daro challenges long-held assumptions about early urban development and offers enduring lessons in sustainability and resilience.

G

In popular imagination, Mohenjo-Daro is sometimes likened to Atlantis—a lost civilization swallowed by time. While not mythical, its partial obscurity lends it a similar allure. With continued excavation and preservation, perhaps more of its secrets will be revealed. Until then, Mohenjo-Daro stands as a silent monument to the ingenuity and mystery of the ancient world.

Questions

Questions 1–5

Summary Completion

Complete the summary using words from the passage.

Choose NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS for each answer.

The ancient city of Mohenjo-Daro, located in present-day 1. _____, was part of the Indus Valley Civilization and featured advanced infrastructure such as brick houses and a 2. _____ layout. One of its most notable architectural features is the Great Bath, which may have been used for 3. _____ purposes. The presence of undeciphered 4. _____ on artifacts suggests a developed form of communication, though no translation key has been found. Some scholars believe the city's decline may have been caused by environmental factors, particularly the weakening of the 5. _____.

Questions 6–8

Matching Information

Match each piece of information with the correct paragraph (A–G).

You may use any letter more than once.

6. A comparison between Mohenjo-Daro and a legendary civilization
 7. An explanation for why early interpretations of the city's social hierarchy remain debated
 8. Reference to international efforts to protect the site
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Questions 9–11

Yes / No / Not Given

Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer?

Write YES if the statement agrees with the views of the writer,

NO if it contradicts them,

NOT GIVEN if there is no information on this.

9. Mohenjo-Daro was first discovered in the 18th century.
 10. The Indus script likely represents a spoken language.
 11. Tourism is a greater threat to Mohenjo-Daro than flooding.
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Questions 12–13

Multiple Choice

Choose the correct letter A, B, C, or D.

12. Which of the following best describes a major unanswered question about Mohenjo-Daro?
 - A. Why its inhabitants built large pyramids
 - B. The function of its elaborate trade routes
 - C. How its language can be translated
 - D. The origins of its brick-making techniques
13. What is the main idea of the article?
 - A. The Indus Valley Civilization remains less important than other ancient cultures
 - B. Mohenjo-Daro is underappreciated due to its lack of monumental architecture
 - C. Mohenjo-Daro offers insight into a sophisticated and mysterious

ancient urban society

D. The Indus script will never be deciphered, leaving historians in doubt

Answer Key

1. Pakistan
2. grid
3. ritual
4. script
5. monsoon rains
6. G
7. B
8. E
9. NO
10. NOT GIVEN
11. NOT GIVEN
12. C
13. C