

Indus Valley Civilization

Indus Valley Civilization

- A Primary Phase Culture
- Little or no continuity with the following cultures
- Forgotten until the 19th Century
 - rediscovered by the British, while building railroads

Harappan society and its neighbors, ca. 2000 B.C.E.



Harappan Culture

- Indus valley
 - not desert
 - well-watered and heavily forested
- 500 miles along the river valley
 - 10-20 times larger than Mesopotamia or Egypt

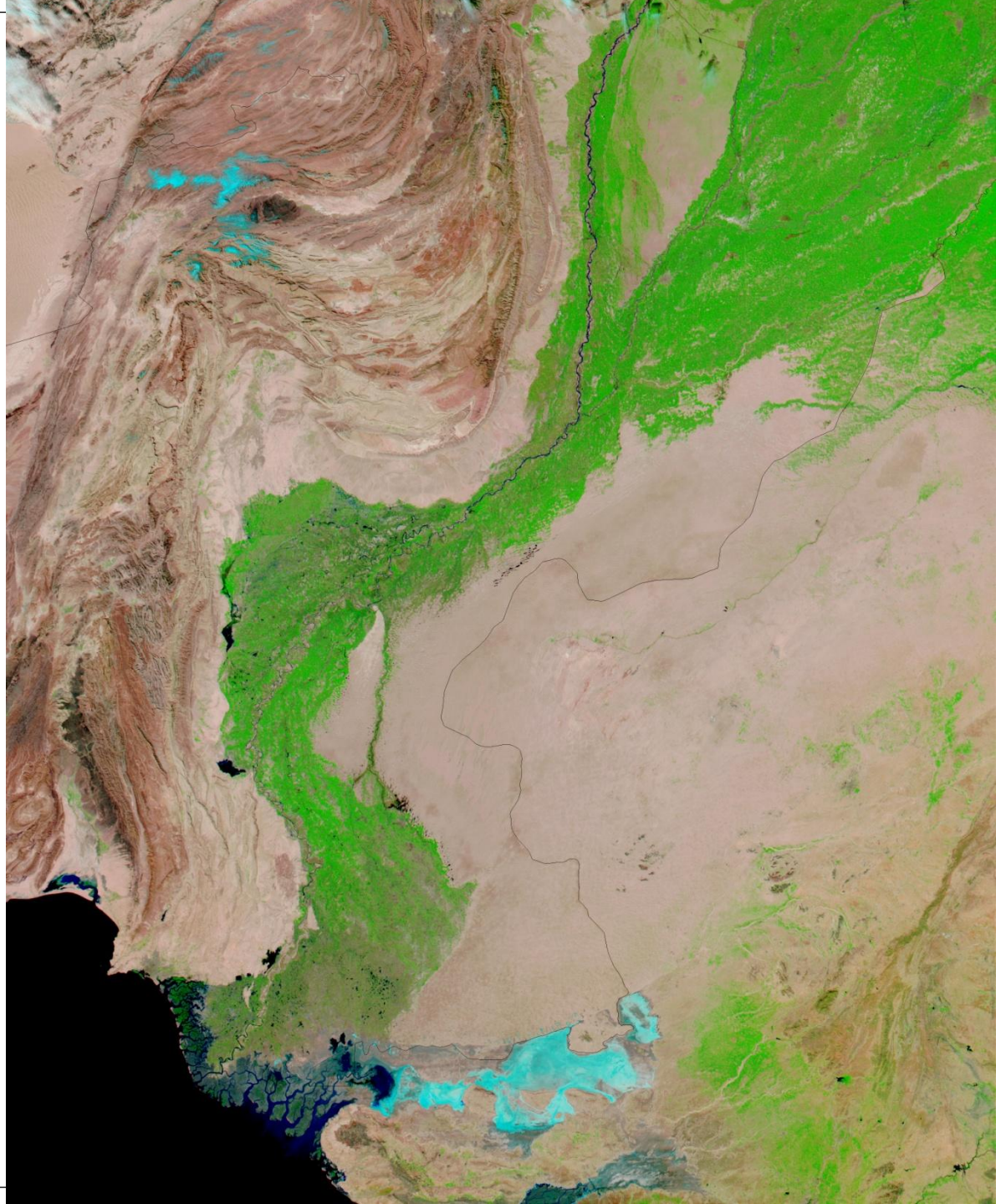


Foundations of Harappan Society

- The Indus River
 - Silt-enriched water from mountain ranges
- Major society, 3000-2500 BCE
 - Cultivation of cotton before 5000 BCE
 - Early cultivation of poultry
 - Decline after 1900 BCE
- Major cities
 - Harrapa (Punjab region)
 - Mohenjo-Daro (mouth of Indus River)

Hydraulic Culture

- Like Egypt and Mesopotamia
- Agriculture and flood-control
- Significant industry and trade



Monsoons

- A dominant characteristic of the Indian Subcontinent



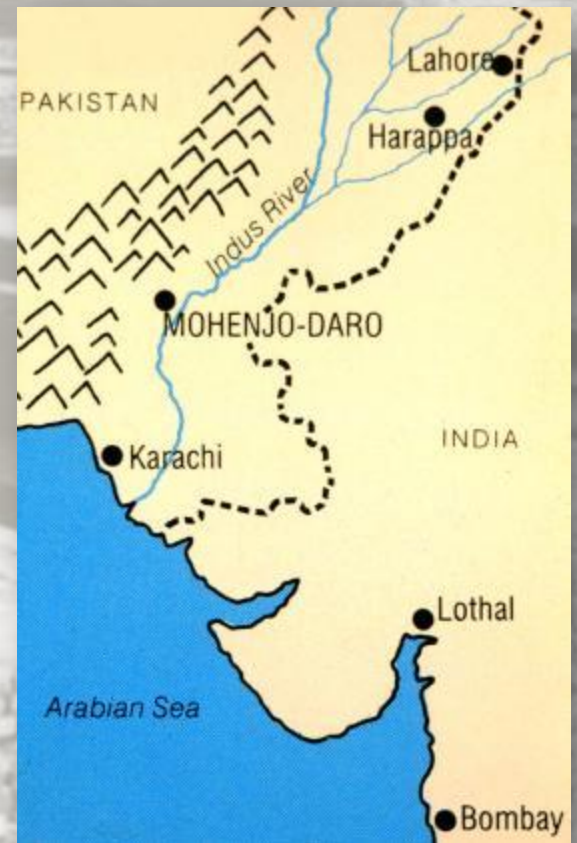
Cities

- Very densely populated
- Houses: two to three stories
- Every house is laid out the same



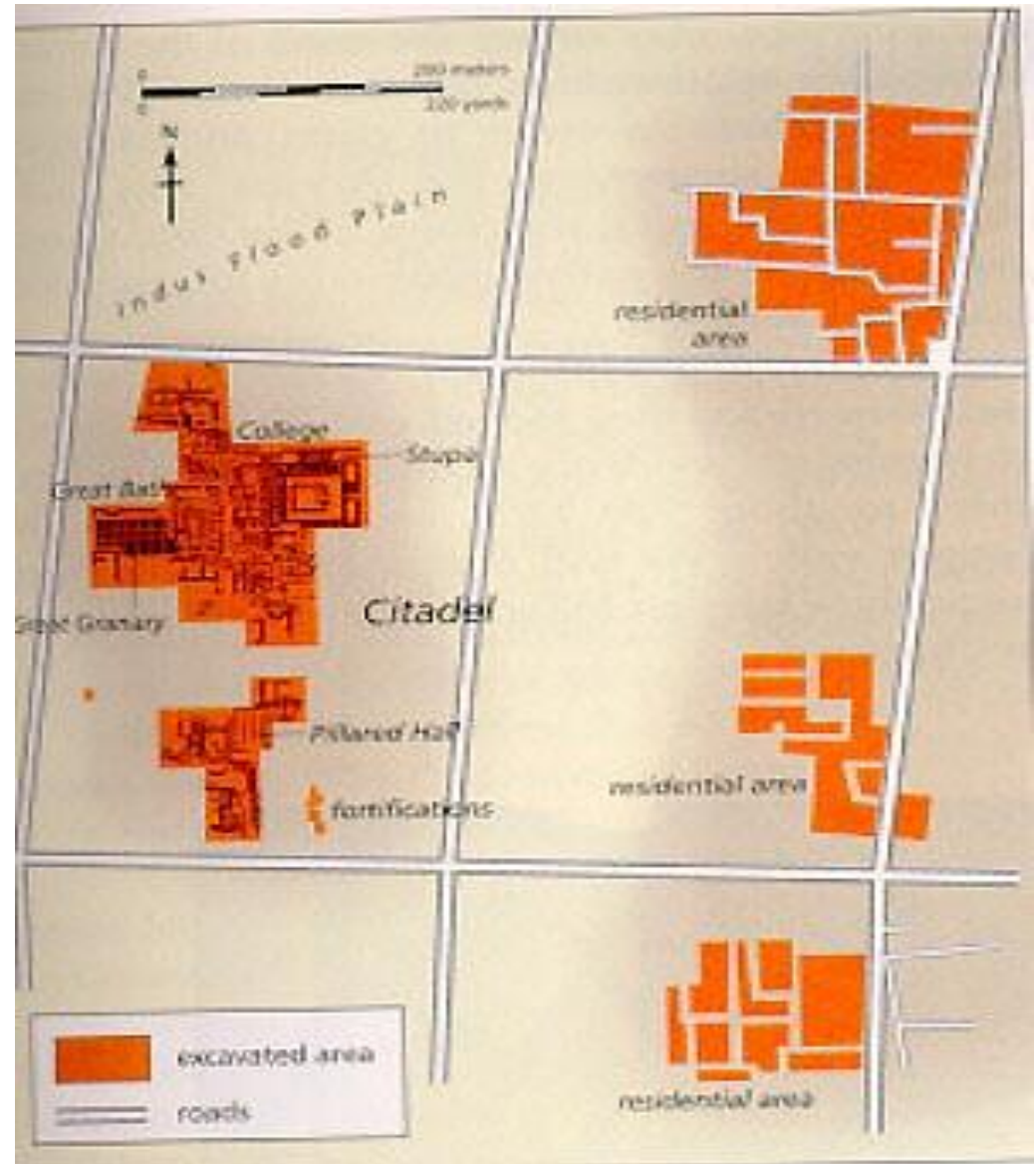
Mohenjo-Daro

- Population c. 40,000
- Regional center
 - Layout, architecture suggests public purpose
 - Broad streets, citadel, pool, sewage
- Standardized weights evident throughout region
- Specialized labor
- Trade



Mohenjo-Daro

- Uniform culture over a wide area
- Cities built on a common plan
 - a grid: always NS and EW axes
 - with twelve smaller grids
- kiln-dried brick





A view of the “Great Bath”

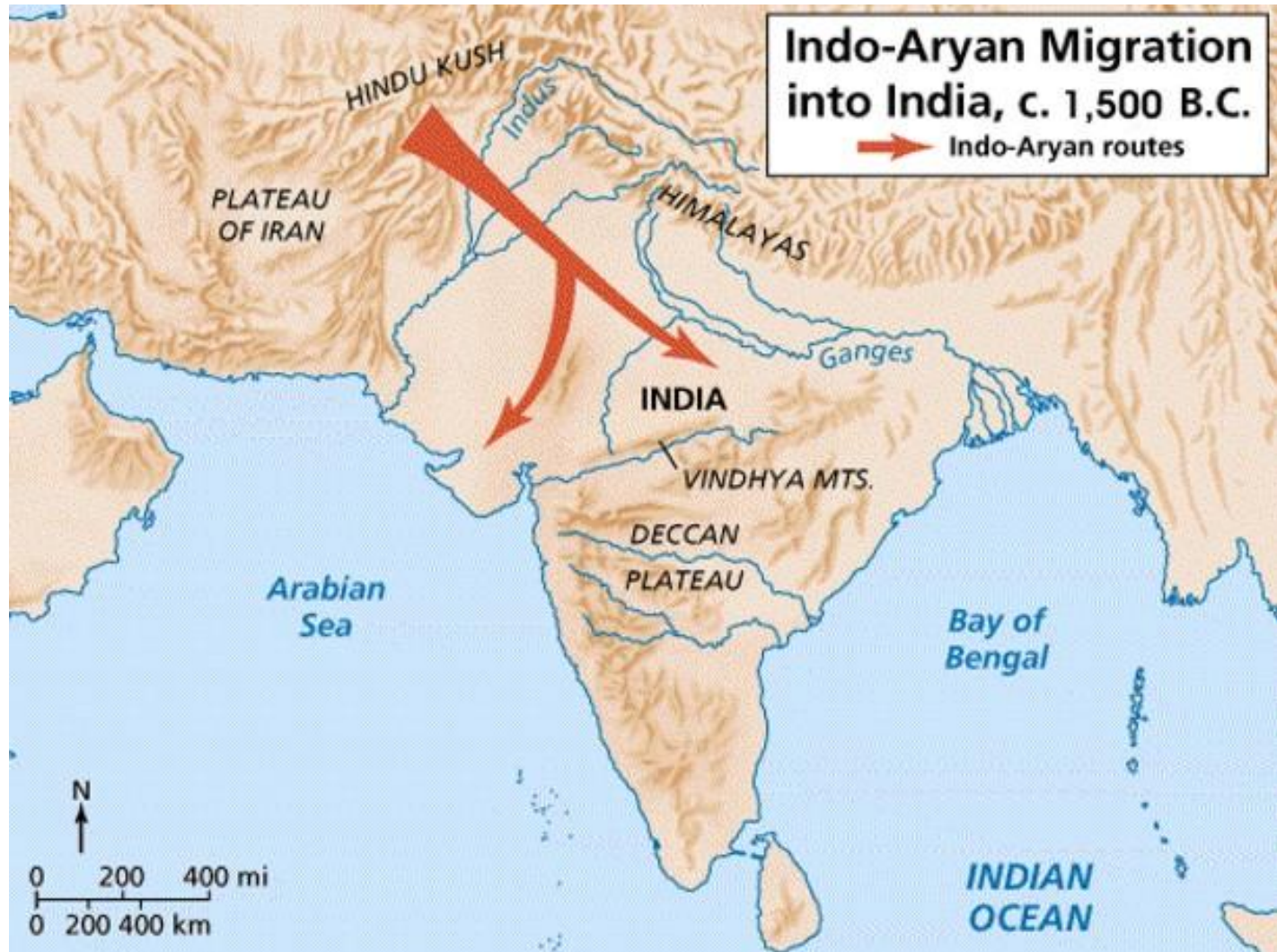
Harappan Society

- Dominated by priests ?
- From the fortified palaces and temples ?
- Power base: fertility ?
- Deities: male and female
- No written records

The Aryan “Invasion”

- Aryans, lighter-skinned invaders from the north
- Warrior-nomads
- Indo-European language and culture
- Difficulty of theory: no evidence of large-scale military conquest

Possible route of the Aryan invasions



The Early Aryans

- Entered India in about 1500 BCE
- Pastoral economy: sheep, goats, horses, cattle
 - Vegetarianism not widespread until many centuries later
- Religious and Literary works: The Vedas
 - Sanskrit: sacred tongue
 - Prakrit: everyday language, evolved into Hindi, Urdu, Bengali
 - Four Vedas, most important Rig Veda
 - 1,028 hymns to gods

Oral Tradition

- passed down from priests and singers
- written down in the 500's
- **The Vedas**
 - “Veda” means “knowledge”

The Vedas

- our primary source
 - early Aryan tradition
 - later Hindu religion
- four “vedas”
 - the **Rig Veda** is the oldest

The Vedas

- oral poetry
- come to have a sacred character
- provide some historical information

The Aryans

- restless, warlike people
- tall, fair-skinned
- describe the indigenous population as
 - short, “black”, enslaved

The Aryans, con't

- villages and kingdoms constantly fighting
- warchiefs and kings
- aristocrats and freemen

The Aryans, con't

- fond of fighting, drinking, chariot racing, gambling chasing women and bragging about their spears
 - any modern comparisons ???
- fond of taking **soma**
 - a psychedelic drug
 - probably psychotropic mushrooms

Aryans and Hindus

- Aryans give rise to Hindu society, but some different characteristics
 - Cows: they ate them
 - Classes, but no castes
 - Priests subordinate to the nobility
- *the Mahabharata*

The Iron Age: new sources

- **the Vedas:** passed on orally
- **the Brahmanas:** interpretations on the Vedas
- **the Upanishads:** interpretations and symbolic studies
 - forerunners of later dissenting literature

Strain of change

- Iron Age change causes strain on the class system
- blurring of lines between Aryans and Daas
 - answered with the **caste system**

Caste System, 1000 BC

- skin color
- ritual purity
- “Us--Them” feelings
- divine order of four castes

Caste System (“Varnas”)

- **Brahmins**: the priests
- **Kshatriyas**: the warriors
- **Vaisyas**: merchants and peasants
- **Sudras**: non-Aryans

- **dalits**: lowest class, performed the most undesirable jobs

Caste system, con't

- produced by Brahmins
- literature emphasized the divine order
- hierarchical relationship
- inheritance and marriage

Caste system in practice

- warrior class did not always accept it
- nor the other classes
- the process of evolution is still going on
- the most powerful organizer of Indian society
 - thousand of castes today