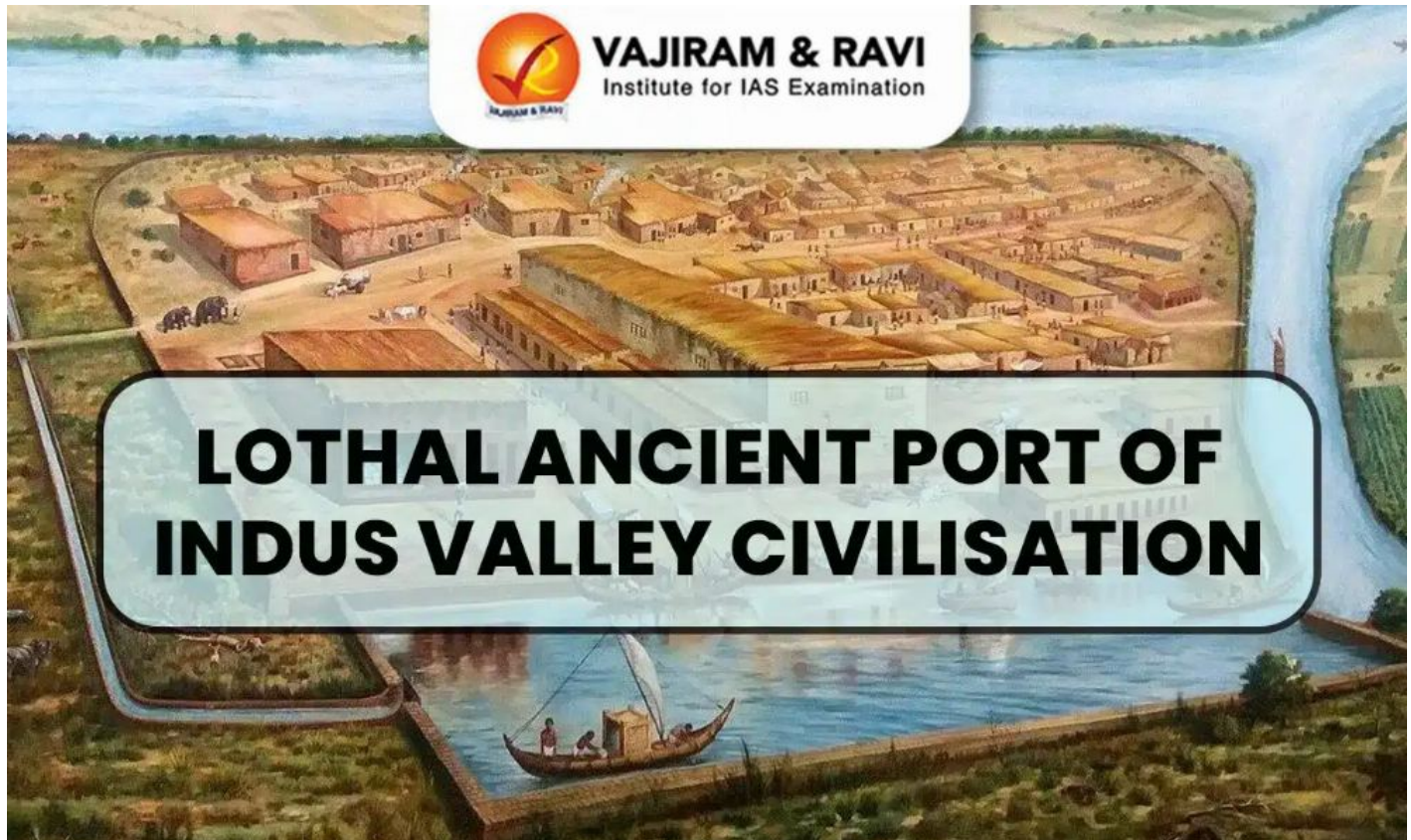


Lothal: Ancient Port of Indus Valley Civilisation, UPSC Notes

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LOTHAL ANCIENT PORT OF INDUS VALLEY CIVILISATION

The ancient city of Lothal, a port town from the **Indus Valley Civilization**, is located along the Bhogava River in the Gulf of Khambhat. Archaeological evidence indicates that the Harappa culture flourished at this site from 2400 BCE to 1600 BCE.

Lothal was divided into the upper and lower towns. The remains of the lower town suggest evidence of a bead-making factory, a warehouse, and a **Tidal dockyard**. The discovery of stone anchors, marine shells, and seals, some of which may have originated from the Persian Gulf, provides strong evidence that this basin served as a dockyard.

Lothal Overview

Lothal was one of the southern cities of the Indus Valley civilization, located in the Gulf of Khambhat region. Lothal's name comes from two Gujarati words, "Loth" and "thal," which mean "the mound of the dead."

- **Discovery:** Lothal was discovered by SR Rao, an Indian archaeologist, in 1954.

- **Unique Features:** According to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Lothal had the world's earliest known dock, connecting the city to an ancient course of the Sabarmati River.
 - It was surrounded by a massive brick wall as flood protection.
 - Lothal remained an **emporium of trade** between the Harappan civilization and the remaining part of India, as well as Mesopotamia and Africa.
 - It was known for its trade of beads, gems, and ornaments.

Lothal Archaeological Findings

Lothal has yielded a wealth of archaeological findings that provide invaluable insights into the culture, technology, and social organization of this remarkable civilization. The important archaeological findings of Lothal are given below:

- **Architecture:** Lothal was divided into two parts: **the Citadel or Upper town** and the Lower town.
 - **Citadel:** Instead of a traditional fortification wall, the citadel was surrounded by 4-meter-tall mud-brick platforms. A **warehouse** was also discovered inside the citadel.
 - **Lower town:** A **bead factory** and **tidal dockyard** were discovered.
- **Science and Engineering:** A **compass** and an ivory scale were discovered at Lothal.
 - The compass was used as an instrument for measuring the angles and positions of stars, and for navigation
 - An **ivory scale** from Lothal has the smallest-known decimal divisions in Indus civilization.
- **Religion:** The people of Lothal worshipped a **fire god**, speculated to be the horned deity depicted on **seals named Atha(Athar) and Arka**.
 - Archaeological evidence suggests that the people of Lothal worshipped animals, but there is **no evidence of the worship of the Mother Goddess**, which is common in other Harappan cities.
 - Experts believe that this difference in religious practices indicates that there was a diversity of religious traditions in the Indus Valley Civilization.
- **Burial practices:** At Lothal the burial pit was lined with burnt bricks, indicating the use of **coffins**.
 - **Twin Burial:** The practice of pot burials is found at Lothal sometimes with pairs of skeletons
 - However, there is **no clear evidence** for the practice of **Sati**.
- **Metallurgy and jewellery:** They also employed advanced metallurgy in following the **Cire Perdue technique** of casting and used more than one-piece moulds for casting birds and animals
 - Lothal had been one of the most important centres of production for **shell-working**, owing to the abundance of chank shells of high quality found in the Gulf of Kutch and near the Kathiawar coast.
- **Art:** Lothal was an important centre of the **Bead industry**.
 - **Beads:** **Double-eye beads** of agate, **gold-capped beads** of jasper, and carnelian beads are among those attributed as uniquely from Lothal.
 - It was very famous for **micro-cylindrical beads** of steatite (chlorite).
 - **Seals:** Lothal has the **3rd largest number of seals** among all IVC sites.
 - short-horned bulls, mountain goats, tigers, and composite animals like the elephant bull are depicted on the seals. These figures may have held symbolic or religious significance.

- Almost every seal from Lothal bears a short inscription of intaglio, which may have served as a form of identification or record-keeping.
- **Pottery: Redware pottery** is most commonly found in Lothal and used for daily activities.
 - **Blackware pottery** is less common than redware but is still significant and was often used for finer goods, such as drinking vessels and decorative items.
- **Terracotta Art:** Gamesmen resembling modern-day **Chess board**.
 - Animal figures with wheels and a movable head which were used as toys were also discovered.

Lothal Dockyard

The most distinctive feature of Lothal is the dockyard, which is located on the eastern edge of the site. The dock is roughly 200 meters long and about 35 meters wide.

- To minimize siltation and ensure accessibility during high tides, the dock was strategically positioned away from the river's main current.
- A **sluice gate** and a **spill channel** maintained a consistent water level in the dockyard.
- Lothal's strategic position on the **Sabarmati River** made it a key trading hub, connecting the Harappan cities of Sindh and Saurashtra.
- Lothal's location was perfectly suited for a dock, as the **Gulf of Khambhat's high tidal amplitude** and the river estuary's flow tides created favourable conditions for ship movement.
- For efficient loading, a ramp provided a direct pathway from the dock to the warehouse.

Lothal Significance

Lothal, an ancient port city of the **Indus Valley Civilization** (IVC), holds immense significance for understanding the IVC's urban planning, engineering prowess, and maritime trade.

- Lothal played a crucial role in the Harappan Civilization due to its **fertile cotton and rice-growing regions**, as well as its thriving bead-making industry.
- Lothal is renowned for its exquisite **beads and semi-precious stones**, showcasing the remarkable craftsmanship of its artisans.
- Archaeological evidence suggests that Lothal's beads reached far-flung regions, including Mesopotamia, demonstrating the city's **robust trade networks** and its significant role in the ancient world economy.
- Archaeological excavations at **Lothal** and Rangpur have revealed the **earliest evidence of rice cultivation in South Asia**, dating back to the later Harappan period.
- Lothal's most celebrated excavation is its **tidal dockyard**. It is the **oldest known artificial dock** in the world, demonstrating the IVC's advanced maritime technology.
- The presence of **fire altars**, where sacrifices of animals and cattle were conducted, confirms the worship of a fire god.
- The discovery of gold pendants, charred ashes of terra-cotta cakes and pottery, bovine remains, beads, and other signs indicate the practice of the **Gavamayana sacrifice**, associated with the ancient Vedic religion.
- The **National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC)** is being developed at Lothal to display India's diverse maritime heritage.

- The National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) is poised to become the **world's largest maritime museum complex**, transforming into an international tourism hub.

Lothal UPSC PYQs

Question 1: Match List-I(Ancient site) with List II (Archaeological finding) and select the correct answer using the codes given below the lists: **(UPSC CSE 2002)**

	List I (Ancient site)		List II (Archaeological Finding)
A	Lothal	1	Plough field
B	Kalibangan	2	Dockyard
C	Dholavira	3	Terracotta replica of a Plough
D	Banawali	4	An inscription comprising ten large-sized signs of the Harappan script

1. A-1; B-2; C-3; D-4
2. A-2; B-1; C-4; D-3
3. A-1; B-2; C-4; D-3
4. A-2; B-1; C-3; D-4

Answer: Option (b)

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