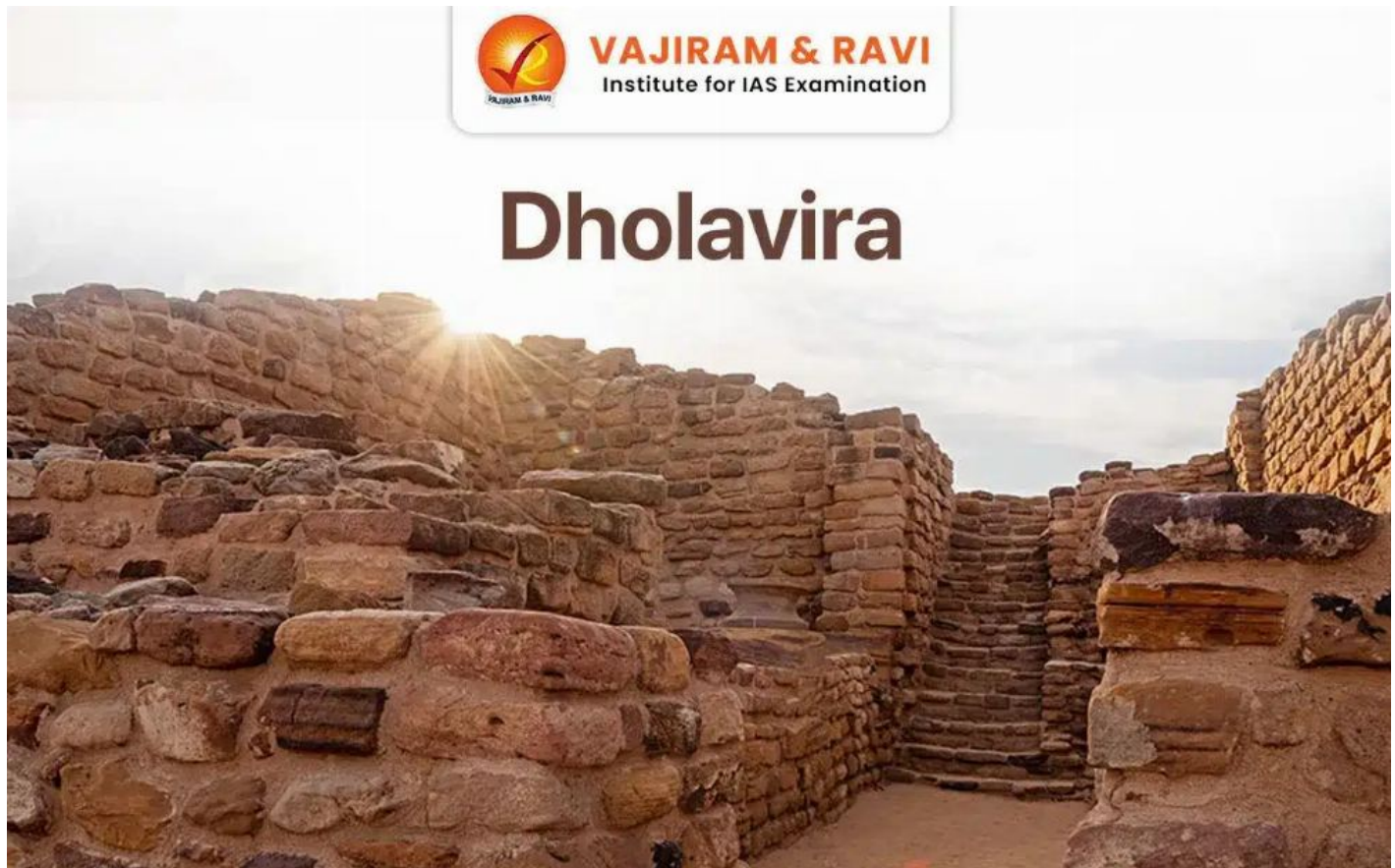


Dholavira Gujarat: Largest Harappan Site

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The ancient city of Dholavira, locally known as Kotada Timba, is one of the five largest sites of the Indus Valley Civilisation. Recent archaeological evidence suggests that Dholavira was occupied around 3500 BCE (pre-Harappan period) and lasted until around 1800 BCE, the late Harappan period.

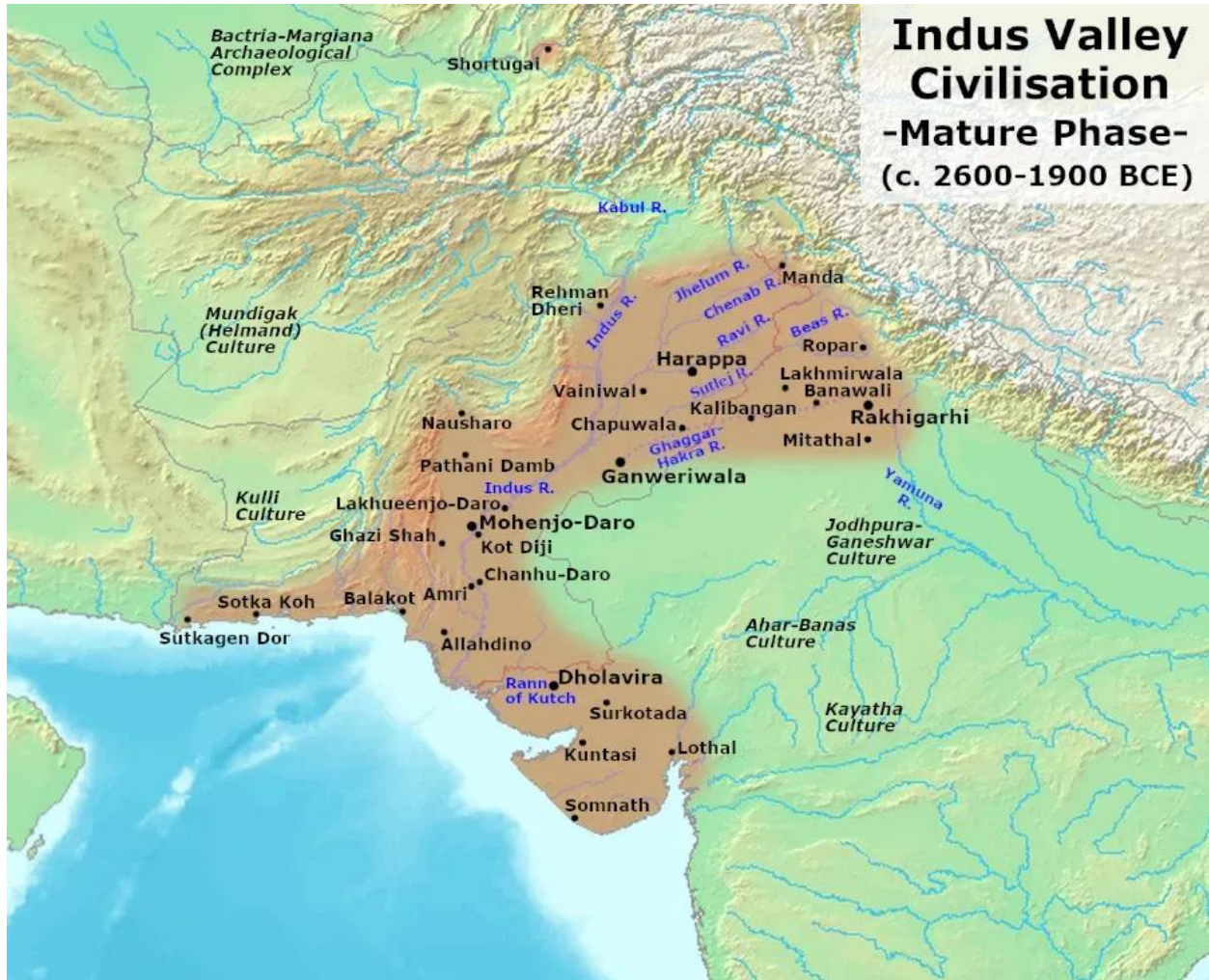
It is located on Khadir Bet Island in the Kutch Desert Wildlife Sanctuary in the **Great Rann of Kutch**, Gujarat, which also lies on the Tropic of Cancer. The excavation also tells the story of the seven stages of civilization, from development to maturity to decay. **UNESCO** has included Dholavira in the list of World Heritage Sites in 2021.

About Dholavira

Dholavira, which is the **southern centre of the Harappan Civilization**, sprawling over 100 hectares of semi-arid land, is located on the **island of Khadir, the Great Rann of Kutch**. During the monsoon season, it remains above the floodplains while the rest of the desert is submerged.

- **Sources of water:** Dholavira has two seasonal streams: **Mansar** in the north, and **Manhar** in the south.
- **Discovery:** It was discovered by **archaeologist Jagat Pati Joshi in 1967** but has been systematically excavated only since 1990.

- **Unique Features:** Water management system, multi-layered defensive mechanisms, extensive use of stone in construction, and special burial structures.



Archaeological Findings of Dholavira

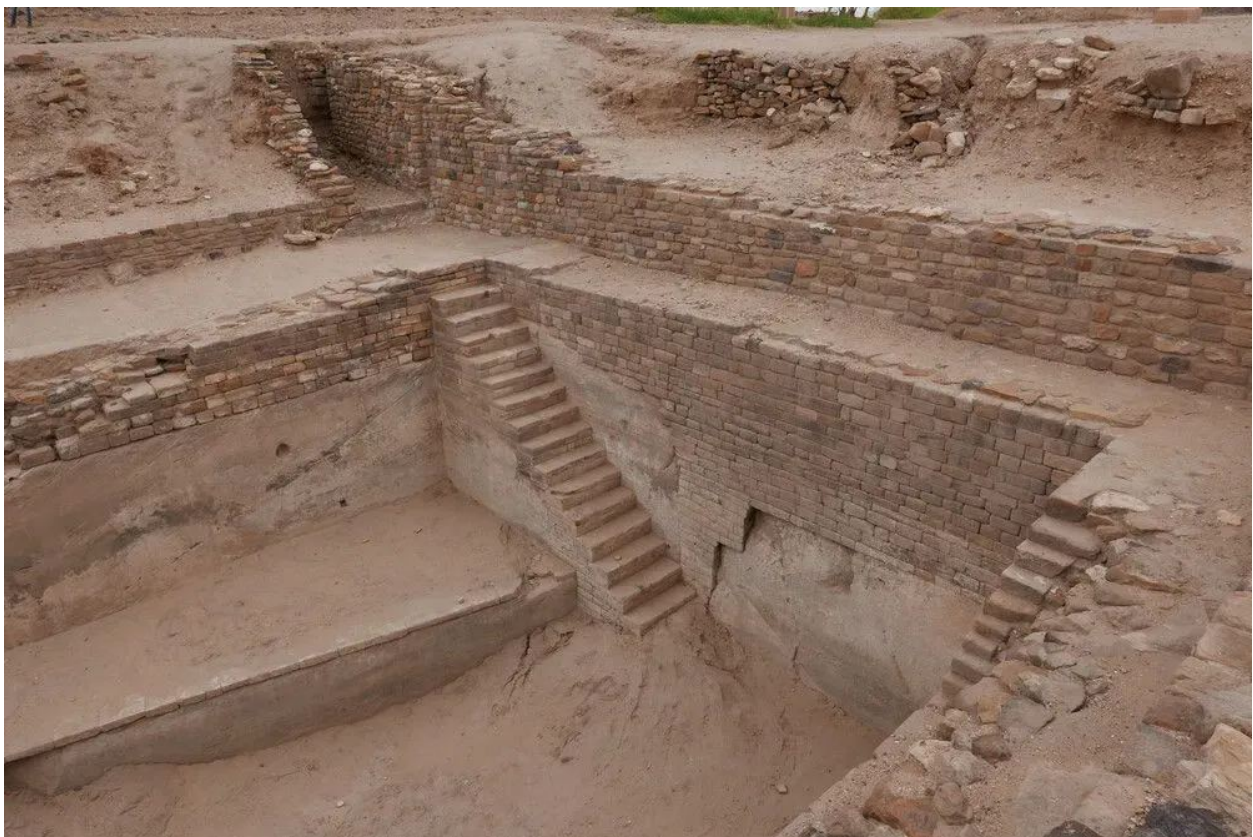
Dholavira has yielded a wealth of archaeological findings that provide invaluable insights into the culture, technology, and social organization of this remarkable civilization. The important archaeological findings of Dholavira are given below:

- **Architecture:** The cityscape of Dholavira consisted of a '**citadel**', a **middle town**', and a **lower town**, the only city to be divided into 3 parts.
 - The city was, perhaps, configured like a large **parallelogram** boldly outlined by massive walls, with their longer axis being from east to west.
 - Large-scale use of **sandstone** along with mud brick.
 - The massive **stone masonry** and **stone pillars** at the citadel are very distinctive and are not found at any other site.
 - **There were two multi-purpose Grounds:** one of which was used for festivities and the other as a marketplace.
 - **Funerary architecture:** Hemispherical structures similar to Buddhist stupas. The great majority of the burials in the Cemetery are memorials.

- **Water management system:** The unique features of the Dholavira site include a cascading series of water reservoirs.
- **Pottery:** **Black on red ware** pottery, **Redware**, and **Buff ware** pottery. Red Ware was typically used for cooking and storage, while Buff Ware was often used for serving and ceremonial purposes.
- **Art and crafts:** Bead making out of steatite, agate, carnelian, lapis lazuli, terracotta, gold, silver, and copper.
- **Weights and measures:** It was made up of **chert (rock)**.
 - The **binary system** is used for the smaller weights (1:2:8:16:32:64) and the **decimal system** for the higher weights (with a ratio of 160, 200, 320, and 640).
 - Used for **trade and commerce**.
- **Trade:** Access to raw material sources such as copper, shell, agate-carnelian, steatite, lead, and banded limestone facilitated internal as well as external trade to the **Magan** (modern Oman peninsula) and **Mesopotamian** regions.
- An **inscription comprising ten large-sized signs of the Harappan script is** similar to a sign board.

Water Conservation System

Dholavira is renowned for its sophisticated water harvesting system, due to which it is known as *alake city* or a ***jala durga* (water fort)**.



The system's key features include:

- **Rainwater harvesting reservoirs:** Dholavira constructed 16 reservoirs of varying sizes on Manhar and Mansar to capture rainwater runoff from the surrounding hills.

- **Channel network:** A network of channels, some carved out of stone and others made of pottery pipes, was connected to the reservoirs and transported water to different parts of the city.
- **Check dams and bunds:** To prevent rainwater from flowing away during floods, check dams and bunds were constructed along the streams near the city. These structures slowed down the water flow, allowing it to percolate into the ground and replenish the groundwater reserves.
- **Underground water storage:** To further enhance water conservation, the Harappans of Dholavira utilized underground storage systems.
 - Stepwells were constructed to access underground water sources during periods of low rainfall.
 - An ancient stepwell has reportedly been found in Dholavira, which is said to be three times bigger than the Great Bath at Mohenjo Daro.
- **Water Management Practices:** They used water sparingly for irrigation, preferring to use more efficient methods like **drip irrigation**.
- **Waterproofing Techniques:** To prevent water loss from reservoirs and channels. They used clay or other materials to seal any leaks and ensure efficient water storage.

Significance of Dholavira

Dholavira stands as an exceptional example of an urban settlement that flourished during the Bronze Age and belonged to the Harappan Civilization.

- The **fortifications** in Dholavira indicate that the element of force in the Harappan culture has been underestimated.
 - However, the elements of warfare, conflict, and force in the Harappan civilization seem weak compared to contemporary Mesopotamia and Egypt.
- The discoveries at the site of Dholavira indicate that the origins of **monumental stone sculpture and architecture** in the Indian subcontinent date back to the Harappan civilization.
- **Dholavira's water management system** stands as a remarkable feat of engineering, demonstrating the Harappans' ability to harness natural resources and adapt to their environment.
- **UNESCO recognition:** In 2021, UNESCO inscribed Dholavira on the **World Heritage List**, acknowledging its outstanding universal value as a testament to **human ingenuity and cultural achievements**.

Dholavira UPSC PYQs

Question 1: Which of the following ancient towns is well-known for its elaborate system of water harvesting and management by building a series of dams and channelling water into connected reservoirs? **(UPSC CSE 2021)**

1. Dholavira
2. Kalibangan
3. Rakhigarhi
4. Ropar

Answer: Option (a)

Question 2: 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)

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/upsc-exam/dholavira/>

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