

Around five thousand years ago, an important civilization developed on the Indus River **floodplain**. From about 2600 B.C. to 1700 B.C. a vast number of **settlements** were built on the banks of the Indus River and surrounding areas. These settlements cover a remarkable region, almost 1.25 million kilometres of land which is today part of Afghanistan, Pakistan and north-western India.

The cities of the Indus Valley **Civilization** were well-organised and solidly built out of brick and stone. Their drainage systems, wells and water storage systems were the most sophisticated in the ancient world. Although the Greeks are noted most for their mathematical understanding, the Indus people also developed systems of weights and trade. Out of a range of materials, they made jewellery and game pieces and toys for their children. From looking at the structures and objects which survive - we are able to learn about the people who lived and worked in these cities so long ago.

The people of the Indus Valley Civilization also developed a writing system which was used for several hundred years. However, unlike some other ancient civilizations, we are still unable to read the words that they wrote.

### Why settle by the Indus River?

**Stone Age** people hunted animals and gathered wild plants to eat. Rivers were good places to look for food thus the first people and the first farmers liked to live near the Indus river. A river keeps the land green and fertile for growing crops by flooding and irrigating the local area. This is especially important in dry areas such as where Pakistan is now. Farmers lived together in villages, this encouraged support and community so they can all help each other. Indus Valley cities like Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro began as riverside farming villages about 5,000 years ago.

The Indus people needed river water to drink, wash and to irrigate their fields. They used water in religious ceremonies. They made boats to travel up and down the rivers. To the Indus people, their river was The King River

### What was everyday life like in the Indus Valley?

It was very hot in the Indus Valley so people spent a lot of time outside. Most people had small homes which were also used as workshops, as a result, there was not much space to relax. Richer families had **courtyards** that were nice open spaces. Children could play there with toys or with pets, such as monkeys and birds. People who did not have a courtyard would still have a flat roof. These roofs were strong enough to walk on. Families used them as an extra room. It was a cool place to sleep on a hot night and somewhere you could sit with friends and entertain.

### What can we learn from Indus Valley artefacts?

The Indus Valley civilisation left no temples or tombs, like the Pyramids of Egypt. There are also no remains of great statues of kings or gods. Instead, the Indus Valley's cultural legacy is of small and well-crafted art.

While many ancient civilisations focused on worship, it seems that play was very important to the Indus Valley people. They made toys and small figures of people and animals, using metal and clay. Small clay figures were thrown into rubbish pits. Perhaps they were good luck charms, or used once and then thrown away?

There were clearly clever settlement builders and it was obvious that they planned the cities which they lived in. These were built on a grid system which is still used by modern town planners throughout the world today.

One of the iconic artefacts of the civilisation are the Indus Valley seals. These unusually carved clay objects have their purpose still debated by archaeologists around the world today. Although the general consensus is that they were used in trading.