



# **HISTORY OF SOUTH ASIA**

**MID TERM EXAMINATION**

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**Topic: Discuss the decline and disappearance of Indus Civilization.**

## **DECLINE AND DISAPPEARANCE OF INDUS CIVILIZATION**

The great Indus Civilization, located in modern-day Pakistan and India, began to decline and disappear around 1800BCE. The civilization eventually disappeared along with its two great cities, Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. Harappa lent its name to Indus Valley people because it was the civilization's first city to be discovered by modern archeologists. Archeological evidence indicates that trades with Mesopotamia, located largely in modern Iraq, seemed to have ended. The advanced drainage system and baths of the great cities were built over or blocked. Writing began to disappear and the standardized weights and measures used for trade and taxation fell out of use.

Scholars have put forth differing theories to explain the decline and disappearance of the Indus Civilization, including an Aryan Invasion and climate change marked by overwhelming monsoons.

### **1. THE ARYAN INVASION:**

According to the Historians and Archeologists, the first reason behind the decline and disappearance of the Indus Civilization is the Aryan Invasion. The Indus Civilization may have met its decline due to invasion. According to one theory by British archeologist Mortimer Wheeler, a nomadic, Indo-European tribe, called the Aryans, suddenly overwhelmed and conquered the Indus River Valley. Wheeler who was Director-General of the Archeological Survey of India from 1944 to 1948, posited that many unburied corpses found in the top levels of the Mohenjo-Daro archeological site were victims of war. The theory suggested that by using horses and more advanced weapons against the Peaceful Indus Civilization's People, the Aryans may have easily defeated them. Yet shortly after Wheeler proposed his theory, other scholars dismissed it by explaining that the skeletons were not victims of invasion massacres, but rather the remains of hasty burials. Wheeler himself eventually admitted that the theory could not be proven and the skeletons indicated only a final phase of human occupation, with the decay of the city structures likely a result of it becoming uninhabited. Various elements of the Indus Civilization are found in later cultures, suggesting the civilization did not disappear suddenly due to invasion. Many scholars came to believe in an Indo-Aryan Migration theory stating that the Indus Civilization Culture was assimilated during a migration of the Aryan People into Northwest India.

### **2. THE CLIMATE CHANGE:**

Other scholars and archeologists suggest the decline and disappearance of the Indus Civilization resulted from climate change. The Indus Valley climate grew cooler and drier, and a tectonic event may have diverted and disrupted the river system which were the lifelines of the Indus Civilization. Some experts believe the drying of the Sarasvati River, which began around 1900BCE, was the main cause for climate change, while others conclude that a great flood struck the area. Any major environmental change, such as deforestation, flooding or droughts due to a river changing course, could have had disastrous effects on the Indus Civilization, such as crop failures,

starvation, and disease. Skeletal evidence suggests many people died from malaria, which is most often spread by mosquitoes. This also would have caused a breakdown in the economy and civic order within the urban areas.

There were several climate changes occurred in the Indus Valley cities which could be the reasons of decline and disappearance of the Indus Civilization, some major changes were:

**a) MONSOON:**

Another reason behind the decline and disappearance of the Indus Civilization might have been eastward moving monsoons, or winds that bring heavy rains. Monsoons can be both helpful and detrimental to a climate, depending on whether they support or destroy vegetation and agriculture. The monsoons that came to the Indus River Valley aided the growth of agricultural surpluses, which supported the development of cities, such as Harappa. The population came to rely on seasonal monsoons rather than irrigation, and as the monsoons shifted eastward, the water supply would have dried up. By 1800BCE, the Indus Valley Climate grew cooler and drier, and a tectonic event may have diverted the Ghagger Hakra river system toward the Ganges Plain. The Indus Valley People may have migrated toward the Ganges basin in the east, where they established villages and isolated farms. These small communities could not produce the same agricultural surpluses to support large cities. Around 1700BCE, most of the Indus Civilization's Cities has been abandoned.

**b) MOVEMENT OF RIVER INDUS:**

Many historians believe the Indus Civilization declined and disappeared because of changes to the geography and climate of the area. Movements in the earth's crust might cause the Indus River to flood and change its direction. The main cities were closely linked to the river, so changes in the river flow would have has a terrible effect on them. Repeated flooding may have led to a build-up of salt in the soil, making it hard to grow crops. It is believed that at the same time, the Ghagger Hakra River which is identified with the Sarasvati River (another river in the area) dried up. People were forced to abandon many of the cities located along its banks, such as Kalibangan and Banawali. People would have starved and diseased would have spread. Perhaps because of this chaos, the rulers lost their control of their cities.

**c) DRIED UP OF RIVER GHAGGER HAKRA (SARASVATI RIVER):**

Between 1900-1500BCE the cities of Indus Civilization were steadily abandoned, and the people moved South. As noted, there is a number of theories concerning the decline and disappearance of the Indus Civilization, but none are completely satisfactory. According to one, the Ghagger Hakra River, which is identified with the Sarasvati River from Vedic texts, and which ran adjacent to the River Indus, dried up in 1900BCE, necessitating a major relocation of the people who had depend on it. Significant silting at sites such as Mohenjo-Daro suggests major flooding which given as another cause.

### **3. COLLAPSE OF TRADE NETWORK:**

Trade was very important for the Indus Civilization. Their main partner was Mesopotamia, which was an advanced civilization in the Middle East. Around the time the Indus Cities started to fail, Mesopotamia was going through huge political problems. Their trade networks collapse and this would have had a big impact on the Indus cities. There would have been less work for traders and for manufacturers, who made the things which the traders sold abroad. Some historian think this is the reason behind the decline and disappearance of Indus Valley civilization.

### **4. WAR:**

Some historian believed the Indus Civilization was destroyed in a large war. In the 1940', archeologist Mortimer Wheeler discovered 39 human skeletons at Mohenjo-Daro. He believed that they were people killed by invaders. Archeologists now think this is not true. There is no evidence of war or mass killings. Indus valley people seem to have been peaceful. If they had an army, they have left few signs of weapons or battles. It more likely that the cities collapsed after natural disasters. Enemies might have moved in afterwards

## **CONCLUSION:**

There are a number of theories concerning about the decline and disappearance of the Indus civilization, but none are completely satisfactory. As far as The Aryan Invasion Theory is concern, though still cited and advanced by those with a racist agenda, lost credence in the 1960's CE through work, primarily, of the American archeologist George F. Dales who reviewed wheeler's interpretations, visited the sites, and found no evidence to support it. The Skeletons Wheeler has interpreted as dying a violent death in battle showed no such signs nor did the cities exhibit any damage associated with war.

Further, there was no evidence of any kind of mobilization of a great army of the north nor of any conquest 1900BCE in India. The Persians, the only ethnicity self-identifying as Aryan were themselves a minority on the Iranian Plateau between 1900BCE to 1500BCE and is no position to mount an invasion of any kind. It was therefore suggested that "The Aryan Invasion" was actually most likely migration of Indo-Iranians who merged peacefully with the indigenous people of India, intermarried, and were assimilated into the culture.

As excavations of the sites of the Indus Civilization continue, more information will no doubt contribute to a better understanding its history and reasons behind its decline and disappearance. One theory suggested that a nomadic, Indo-European tribe, called the Aryans, invaded and conquered the Indus Civilization, while many scholars now believe the decline and disappearance of the Indus Civilization was caused by climate changes, while other says that the eastward shift of monsoons may have reduced the water supply, forcing the Harappans of Indus River Valley to migrate and established smaller villages and isolated farms, and these smaller communities could not produce the agricultural surpluses needed to support cities, which where than declined and disappeared.