



**Ready For Boards**  
10th & 12th Exam Prep

## CHAPTER 1

# Bricks, Beads and Bones

CBSE Class 12 · History · Themes in Indian History I ·  
Chapter 1

CBSE · History · Class 12

### WHAT THIS CHAPTER DOES



Locate 8 major Harappan sites on a map of South Asia.



Describe urban planning of Mohenjodaro/Harappa with 5 specific features.

*Boards prep that builds confidence, not anxiety.*

## TODAY'S MISSION

# Today's mission

1

Locate 8 major Harappan sites on a map of South Asia.

2

Describe urban planning of Mohenjodaro/Harappa with 5 specific features.

3

Discuss decline theories — multi-causal, Aryan invasion rejected.

4

Score 8/10 marks on this chapter's slice of the board paper.

## WHY THIS MATTERS

# Why this chapter matters

1

8-10 marks every CBSE board paper — single highest-weight chapter in Class 12 History.

2

Foundation for understanding ancient Indian civilisation + an exemplar of how archaeology reconstructs the past.

3

Source-based questions test skills used across all of History — practise the 5-step template.

TOPIC

**A**

**Discovery & dates**

**TOPIC**

# Key dates & discoveries

## EARLY HARAPPAN

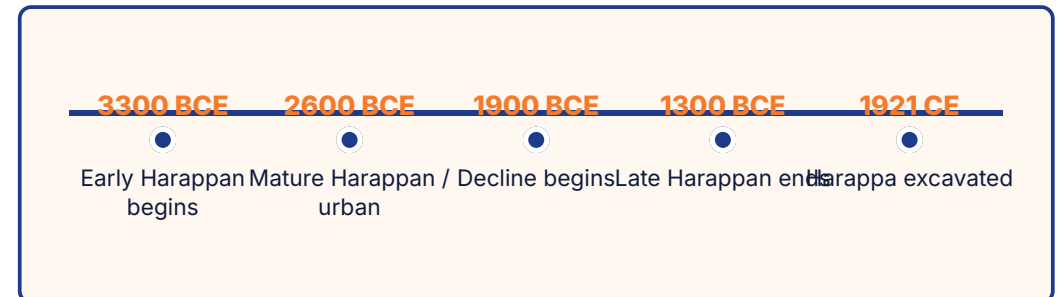
The EARLY HARAPPAN phase (c. 3300–2600 BCE) consists of pre-urban farming villages spread across

## MATURE HARAPPAN

The MATURE HARAPPAN phase (c. 2600–1900 BCE) is the urban climax. Five major cities — Mohenjodaro

## LATE HARAPPAN

The LATE HARAPPAN phase (c. 1900–1300 BCE) marks gradual decline and DEURBANISATION rather than



TOPIC

**B**

**Geographic extent**

## TOPIC

# Sites spanning 1 million km<sup>2</sup> — far beyond just the Indus

### NORTHWEST (NOW AFGHANISTAN/PAKISTAN)

The northwestern extent of the Harappan civilisation reaches into present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan. Shortugai in north-eastern Afghanistan was a small Harappan trading outpost on the Oxus, established to source lapis lazuli from nearby Badakhshan mines. Mohenjodaro on the lower Indus and Harappa in West

### NORTH + WEST INDIA

In modern India the Harappan civilisation reached as far north and east as the Haryana plains: Rakhigarhi in Haryana, on the Drishadvati/Saraswati system, is possibly the **LARGEST** site of the entire Mature phase (~350 hectares — larger than Mohenjodaro). Banawali, also in Haryana, shows continuous occupation

### GUJARAT COASTLINE

On the Gujarat coast the Harappans built three remarkable sites. **LOTHAL** has the world's earliest known **DOCKYARD** — a rectangular basin (213 × 37 m) with an inlet for high-tide ships, indicating maritime trade with Mesopotamia. **DHOLAVIRA** in Kutch is celebrated for its extraordinary **WATER-HARVESTING** reservoirs (16

### EASTWARD EXTENT

The Harappan civilisation reached far beyond its Indus heartland. **ALAMGIRPUR** in Uttar Pradesh, near the Hindon River, is the **EASTERNMOST** known site. **DAIMABAD** in Maharashtra, on the Pravara River, is the **SOUTHERNMOST** and yielded the famous bronze 'Chariot Drawn by Two Bulls'. Together with sites in

TOPIC

C

# Urban planning — the 'planned city'

**THEOREM · LOAD-BEARING RESULT**

# Why Harappan Cities Are Called 'Planned'



*Cities like Mohenjodaro and Harappa show systematic, large-scale URBAN PLANNING — grid streets, standardised bricks, integrated drainage, segregated citadel from lower town — features that could not arise by accident.*

## STATEMENT

**Two-part layout: CITADEL (raised, fortified, west — public buildings like Great Bath, granary) + LOWER TOWN (larger, residential, east — houses, wells, workshops). Streets in a grid intersecting at right angles. Bricks standardised in**

## WHY THIS MATTERS

- Planning requires DECISIONS BEFORE BUILDING + a CENTRAL AUTHORITY to enforce uniformity + LARGE LABOUR FORCE
- The uniformity across 1000+ km from Mohenjodaro to Lothal indicates shared norms + organised governance.

## WATCH OUT FOR

**NOTE** Don't conflate 'planned' with 'identical'. Sites differed in size and details (Dholavira had water reservoirs; Lothal had a dockyard). But the CORE features (grid, bricks, drainage, citadel/ lower town division) are uniform.

## WORKED EXAMPLE

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# 5 features of the planned city

- 1** TWO-PART DIVISION: Citadel (raised, fortified, west) + Lower town (residential, east). Distinct functional zones.
- 2** GRID STREETS: Main roads N-S and E-W at right angles. Standardised widths. Side lanes feeding off main streets.
- 3** STANDARDISED BRICKS: 1:2:4 ratio (1 thick : 2 wide : 4 long). Baked for important structures; mud brick for residential. Uniform across 1000+ km.
- 4** DRAINAGE: Every house had a covered drain. Drains connected to brick-lined street sewers with manhole covers for cleaning. World's earliest urban sanitation.
- 5** KEY PUBLIC STRUCTURES: Citadel housed Great Bath (12×7×2.4m, bitumen-lined), granary, possible assembly hall. Lower town had wells, workshops, standardised houses.

TOPIC

**D**

**Economy —  
agriculture + crafts +  
trade**

## TOPIC

# Three pillars of Harappan economy

### AGRICULTURE

Harappan agriculture rested on a diverse set of cereals (WHEAT and BARLEY as the main staples, plus rice in lower Gujarat), pulses (peas, lentils, chickpeas), oil seeds (sesame, mustard), and notably the **WORLD'S FIRST** cultivation of **COTTON** — the fibres found at Mohenjodaro and Mehrgarh predate Egyptian cotton by ~2,000 years

### CRAFTS

Harappan craft specialisation was unrivalled in the contemporary world. **BEAD-MAKING** used carnelian (heat-treated to deepen the red), agate, jasper, faience (a glassy paste), and lapis lazuli imported from Afghanistan. **POTTERY** was uniformly wheel-thrown, slipped red, and decorated in black with geometric and

### TRADE — INTERNAL

**INTERNAL TRADE** within the Harappan world was extraordinarily regulated. The most striking proof: standardised **CUBIC STONE WEIGHTS** in a binary-decimal system (1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, ... up to 12,800 times a unit of ~0.871 g) appear at every major site from Mohenjodaro to Lothal, with surprisingly consistent precision. This

### TRADE — EXTERNAL

**EXTERNAL TRADE** connected the Harappans with **MESOPOTAMIA**. Sumerian and Akkadian cuneiform tablets mention 'MELUHHA' as a distant land famous for carnelian, lapis lazuli, ivory, pearls, and exotic woods — Meluhha is now identified with the Harappan civilisation. Harappan-style seals have been found at

TOPIC

**E**

# Social organisation & religion

## TOPIC

# What we know — and don't

### EVIDENCE FOR DIFFERENTIATION

Several lines of archaeological evidence suggest social differentiation within Harappan cities. (1) The CITADEL — an elevated, walled area in the western half of most cities — is physically separated from the LOWER TOWN, suggesting a distinct elite zone. (2) HOUSES vary

### WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

Despite a century of excavation, fundamental questions about Harappan society remain unanswered because two crucial classes of evidence are MISSING. (1) No clearly identified PALACES, ROYAL TOMBS, or grand TEMPLES have been found — unlike contemporary Egypt or Mesopotamia, where kings and gods left monumental

### BURIAL PRACTICES

Harappan funerary practice was relatively SIMPLE compared to contemporary Egypt or Mesopotamia. The dead were typically buried in rectangular pits, oriented north-south, with the body extended. GRAVE GOODS — pottery vessels, ornaments, sometimes copper tools — accompanied the deceased and indicate belief in an

### RELIGION

Direct evidence of Harappan religion is INDIRECT but suggestive. (1) FEMALE FIGURINES — thousands of terracotta MOTHER GODDESS figures with elaborate headdresses — suggest fertility worship. (2) The PASHUPATI SEAL from Mohenjodaro shows a horned, cross-legged seated figure surrounded by animals (tiger, elephant

TOPIC

**F**

**The script —  
undeciphered  
enigma**

THEOREM · LOAD-BEARING RESULT

# The Harappan Script



*The Harappan script is found on SEALS, TABLETS, COPPER PLATES, and POTTERY. It is PICTOGRAPHIC and LOGOGRAPHIC (signs represent objects or words), with ~400-450 distinct signs. It REMAINS UNDECIPHERED despite a century of study.*

## STATEMENT

Written **RIGHT-TO-LEFT** (evidence: signs are crowded on the right side of seals as writers ran out of space). Average inscription length: 5-6 signs. Longest known: 26 signs. No bilingual text (no Rosetta-stone)

## WHY THIS MATTERS

- Decipherment matters because the script would tell us about Harappan administration, religion, social structure — everything material remains can't.

## WATCH OUT FOR

**NOTE** Periodically 'decipherments' are claimed (S.R. Rao, Asko Parpola, etc.). All are **CONTESTED**. State that the script is undeciphered and the underlying language unknown — that's the safe CBSE position.

TOPIC

**G**

**The decline**

## TOPIC

# Multi-causal — NOT Aryan invasion

### DRYING OF RIVERS

Geological evidence suggests the DRYING UP of the SARASWATI/ GHAGGAR-HAKRA river system around 1900 BCE played a decisive role in Harappan decline. Hundreds of Mature Harappan sites cluster along this river system — particularly in Cholistan, Rajasthan, and Haryana — and their abandonment

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Around 2200–2000 BCE, the wider Bronze Age world entered a phase of climatic instability often called the '4.2-kiloyear event' — a sharp drying of monsoons across South Asia and the Near East. For the Harappans this meant reduced rainfall, increased soil salinity (especially in the lower Indus), shortened agricultural seasons, and

### DEURBANISATION

Harappan decline was not a sudden collapse but a SLOW DEURBANISATION over 500-600 years. Cities shrank; public buildings fell into disuse; standardised weights and the script disappeared; long-distance trade contracted. Populations dispersed into smaller rural settlements (Jhukar, Cemetery H, Lustrous Red Ware

### ARYAN INVASION REJECTED

The 'ARYAN INVASION' theory — proposed by Mortimer Wheeler in 1944 — held that Aryan migrants from Central Asia destroyed the Harappan cities around 1500 BCE. Wheeler cited two pieces of evidence: skeletons found at Mohenjodaro (which he interpreted as a 'massacre') and Rigvedic references to Indra destroying fortified

TOPIC

**H**

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# Archaeology — how we know

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## TOPIC

# Reconstructing the Harappan from material evidence

### ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM

Sir ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM founded the ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA (ASI) in 1861 and served as its first Director-General. He instituted systematic excavation methods — survey, stratigraphic recording, photographic documentation — that became standard practice. His own focus was on early

### JOHN MARSHALL

Sir JOHN MARSHALL became Director-General of the ASI in 1902 and served until 1928, transforming it into a world-class research institution. In 1921–22, when Daya Ram Sahni's and R.D. Banerji's excavation reports reached him, Marshall noticed that the artefacts from Harappa (Punjab) and Mohenjodaro (Sindh, 600 km away) were strikingly

### DAYA RAM SAHNI + R.D. BANERJI

DAYA RAM SAHNI excavated Harappa in 1921 — the FIRST formal excavation of the site, though the ruins had been known to colonial engineers since 1856. He reported finding a planned town with baked-brick architecture, seals, and pottery clearly distinct from any known Indian period. R.D. BANERJI

### MATERIAL EVIDENCE

Without a deciphered script, our entire knowledge of Harappan society comes from MATERIAL EVIDENCE patiently reconstructed by archaeologists. POTTERY provides chronological sequencing (style changes through time) and regional variation. SEALS yield the script (for someday-decipherment), trade contacts (foreign-style

## TOPIC

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# Civilisation name

### TRAP → TRUTH

× **MISTAKE** It's the 'Indus Valley Civilisation'.

✓ **CORRECT** The CURRENT NCERT terminology is 'HARAPPAN CIVILISATION' — named after Harappa, the first site discovered (1921). 'Indus Valley' is older but inaccurate because sites stretch from Afghanistan (Shortugai) to Gujarat (Lothal, Dholavira) and Uttar Pradesh (Alamgirpur) — far beyond the Indus valley.

## TOPIC

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# Script

### TRAP → TRUTH

× **MISTAKE** The Harappan script has been deciphered.

✓ **CORRECT** The Harappan script remains UNDECIPHERED. Reasons: (1) short inscriptions (5-6 signs typical, longest is 26 signs); (2) no bilingual text (no Rosetta Stone equivalent); (3) we don't know the underlying language. We know it was likely read right-to-left and has ~400-450 distinct signs (between alphabetic and logographic).

## TOPIC

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# Great Bath

### TRAP → TRUTH

× **MISTAKE** The Great Bath was used for daily bathing by all citizens.

✓ **CORRECT** The Great Bath was a SPECIAL STRUCTURE — possibly for RITUAL bathing by elites. Located in the Mohenjodaro citadel (raised section), bitumen-lined for waterproofing, with side rooms. Its location, construction quality, and rooms suggest CEREMONIAL use, not daily public bathing.

## TOPIC

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# Decline cause

### TRAP → TRUTH

× **MISTAKE** The Aryans invaded and destroyed Harappan cities.

✓ **CORRECT** The 'Aryan invasion' theory is now LARGELY REJECTED. Current scholarly view: decline was GRADUAL (1900-1500 BCE) and CAUSED BY MULTIPLE FACTORS — climate change (drying of Saraswati/Ghaggar-Hakra), tectonic shifts, deurbanisation, possibly disease, possibly external pressures. NO clear single cause. CBSE marking schemes accept multi-causal explanations.

## TOPIC

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# Mohenjodaro = capital

### TRAP → TRUTH

× **MISTAKE** Mohenjodaro was the capital of the Harappan empire.

✓ **CORRECT** We have NO EVIDENCE Harappan was a unified empire with a capital. Mohenjodaro was a major URBAN CENTRE alongside Harappa, Dholavira, Lothal, Kalibangan, Rakhigarhi. The cultural uniformity (script, weights, town planning) suggests shared values, NOT central rule. Calling it 'the capital' is an anachronism.

## TOPIC

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# Economic base

### TRAP → TRUTH

× **MISTAKE** The Harappans were primarily a trading civilisation.

✓ **CORRECT** Trade was IMPORTANT but the economic FOUNDATION was AGRICULTURE — wheat, barley, peas, sesame, mustard, cotton (the world's first cotton cultivation). Trade in beads, copper, gold, semi-precious stones with Mesopotamia (called 'Meluhha' in Sumerian texts) was secondary. State the agriculture base first, trade second.

TOPPER TEMPLATE · MARK-BY-MARK

# 8-mark: 'Describe the urban planning of Mohenjodaro/Harappa.'

- 1 TWO-PART DIVISION**  
1 m Harappan cities had two clearly demarcated sections: the CITADEL (raised, fortified, west) and the LOWER TOWN (residential, larger, east). This division indicates social or functional differentiation.
- 2 GRID PLAN + STREETS**  
2 m Streets followed a GRID PATTERN — running roughly north-south and east-west, intersecting at right angles. Main streets were wide (up to 10m) with narrower side lanes. This systematic layout had to have been PLANNED before construction — supports the term 'planned city'.
- 3 DRAINAGE SYSTEM**  
2 m Every house had a covered DRAIN connecting to street drains, then to main sewers. Drains were brick-lined, with manholes for cleaning at regular intervals. This is the world's earliest sophisticated urban sanitation. Indicates strong civic administration.
- 4 KEY PUBLIC STRUCTURES**  
2 m Citadel housed: (a) GREAT BATH — bitumen-lined ceremonial tank at Mohenjodaro; (b) GRANARY — large storage structure; (c) public assembly halls. Lower town had standardised brick houses (1:2:4 ratio bricks), wells, and workshops.
- 5 CONCLUSION — 'PLANNED' JUSTIFIED**  
1 m Grid streets + standardised bricks + integrated drainage + segregated citadel/lower town = NONE of this happens by accident. Mohenjodaro/Harappa are 'planned' in the modern town-planning sense — designed and built to a master scheme, possibly under central authority.

TOPPER TEMPLATE · MARK-BY-MARK

# 8-mark: 'Discuss theories on the decline of the Harappan civilisation.'

- 1 TIME FRAME + NATURE**  
1 m  
Decline was GRADUAL, c. 1900-1500 BCE, NOT sudden. Cities were not destroyed simultaneously — different sites declined at different rates. Multi-causal.
- 2 CLIMATE + ENVIRONMENTAL THEORIES**  
2 m  
(a) DRYING of Saraswati/Ghaggar-Hakra river → loss of agricultural base for Cholistan/Rajasthan sites. (b) Climate change → reduced monsoon, soil salinity, deforestation. Environmental stress is now the LEADING explanation in current scholarship.
- 3 TECTONIC + FLOOD THEORIES**  
2 m  
(c) Major TECTONIC shifts may have raised land, altered river courses. (d) FLOODS at Mohenjodaro — though localised, not civilisation-wide. Older theories blamed floods for whole decline; current view sees them as one factor.
- 4 ARYAN INVASION — REJECTED**  
1 m  
(e) ARYAN INVASION theory (proposed by Mortimer Wheeler, 1944, based on Rigveda war references + skeletons at Mohenjodaro) is NOW LARGELY REJECTED. No genetic / archaeological evidence of mass migration coinciding with decline. Skeletons were not contemporary.
- 5 INTERNAL FACTORS**  
1 m  
(f) Possibly DEURBANISATION — economic stress, breakdown of long-distance trade, internal conflict. (g) Possibly disease epidemics.
- 6 CONCLUSION**  
1 m  
Most likely cause: COMBINATION of climate change + drying rivers + deurbanisation, with internal pressures. No single 'event' destroyed the Harappans — the civilisation faded over centuries as the conditions that sustained urban life disappeared.

TOPPER TEMPLATE · MARK-BY-MARK

## 5-mark source-based: Read a passage on Great Bath/Lothal/seal, answer 3 sub-questions.

- 1 LOCATE + DESCRIBE**  
2 m Identify the site/structure mentioned. State its location, dimensions, key features. E.g., 'The Great Bath was located in the citadel of Mohenjodaro, measuring approximately 12m × 7m × 2.4m deep, with bitumen-lined floor and side rooms for changing.'
- 2 FUNCTION + SIGNIFICANCE**  
2 m Explain what scholars believe the structure was USED FOR + why it MATTERS. E.g., 'Likely ritual bathing by elites. Significance: shows sophisticated waterproofing technology + ceremonial use of public space + suggests elite/priestly authority.'
- 3 WIDER IMPLICATION**  
1 m Link to broader theme. E.g., 'The Great Bath + the granary + the citadel together suggest Mohenjodaro had a STRATIFIED society with elite rituals separated from daily life.'

## PYQ PATTERNS

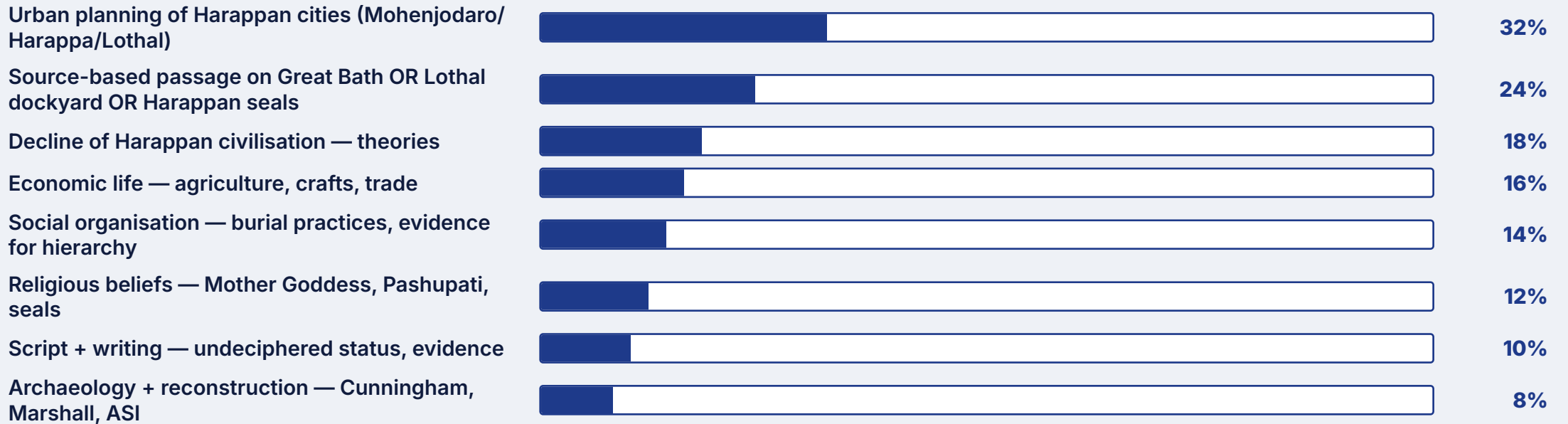
# Top PYQ patterns to drill

#1	Describe the urban planning of Mohenjodaro / Harappa. Why is it called 'planned'? (8 marks)	Annual
#2	Source-based: read a passage on the Great Bath / Lothal / a Harappan seal. Answer 3-4 sub-questions. (5-8 marks)	Annual
#3	Discuss the various theories about the decline of the Harappan civilisation. (8 marks)	2018, 2020, 2022
#4	What evidence do we have for social differences in Harappan society? (5 marks)	2019, 2021, 2023
#5	Why is the Harappan script considered enigmatic? (3 marks)	Most years

## MARKS DISTRIBUTION

# 10-year marks distribution

### 10-YEAR PYQ MARKS DISTRIBUTION



RECAP · MEMORISE THESE

# Recap

**1** Civilisation — Harappan, c. 2600-1900 BCE. Spans >2,500 km. Major sites: Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Dholavira, Lothal, Rakhigarhi.

**2** Urban + economy — Planned cities (citadel + lower town + grid + drainage + bricks). Agriculture base; trade with Mesopotamia. Cotton first cultivated here.

**3** Decline — Multi-causal: drying rivers + climate change + deurbanisation. NOT Aryan invasion (theory rejected).

## WHAT'S NEXT

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# What's next



- Chapter 2 — Kings, Farmers, and Towns (early states + cities 600 BCE onwards).
- Sit the 15-MCQ Quick Drill under 20-min timer.
- Then the full Board-Pattern Paper — 30 marks.



**Ready For Boards**  
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# You've mastered the Harappan baseline.

*Urban planning, economy, decline — now prove it.*

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