

# Most Ancient Urban Civilization Found?

by Ramtanu Maitra

A senior Indian official reported on Jan. 16, 2002 the discovery of submerged city ruins at a depth of 40 meters in the Gulf of Cambay, off the coast of the state of Gujarat in northwestern India—ruins which may be dated to the astonishing age of 7500 B.C. India's National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) made the Cambay discovery. The extreme tidal currents in the Gulf of Cambay have so far prevented any attempt to capture underwater footage of the structures themselves. Instead, the ruins have been investigated through high-resolution sonar scans, and through the recovery of around 2,000 artifacts from the underwater city, including pottery, beads, broken pieces of sculpture, a fossilized jawbone and human teeth. It is these artifacts which have repeatedly yielded the stunning carbon-dating of 8,500-9,500 years, triggering—among those prepared to take the discovery seriously—a re-thinking of the chronology of high human civilizations.

## Two Cities Under the Sea

The sonar scans have so far revealed that the Gulf of Cambay actually hides two cities beneath its waters, both situated beside ancient river courses, as shown by the presence of masses of small pebbles at the sites. One of the cities extends for at least 9 kilometers along the ancient riverbed, and at least 2 kilometers away from it, giving it a minimum urban surface area of 18 square kilometers—the size of Boston. The outer limits of the city have not yet been identified, and further investigation may well reveal that the city is even larger than this. There are remains of a dam more than 600 meters long across one of the ancient river courses.

The scans have also revealed that the cities consist of numerous rectangular buildings with foundations sturdy enough to have survived thousands of years of pounding by the violent tidal currents. NIOT has produced density analyses of the foundations, compared with the silt between them; the analyses suggest that the foundations were built of a uniform substance of great density—probably stone blocks.

Initially, archaeologists assumed these cities belonged to the Harappan civilization, which flourished in northern India (part of which is Pakistan now) around 5,000-3,000 years ago. However, it has been pointed out that geological models of sea-level rise, strongly suggest the site is much older than that. Geologist Glenn Milne at the University of Durham in the United Kingdom believes that the site was probably submerged at the very end of the last Ice Age, between 7,700 and



Remains of one of the very ancient cities discovered under India's Gulf of Cambay (see map) are shown in a simulated picture developed from side-scan sonar images of the remains, taken by the National Institute of Ocean Technology of India. The city covered at least 18 square kilometers (5 square miles), and was covered by the sea 7,500-9,500 years ago. This could date the Vedic civilization millennia earlier than the cities of Mesopotamia, which may be its later colonies.

6,900 years ago—pushing the date of this large city well back into the prehistoric era.

Milne's estimates were recently confirmed by radiocarbon dates noted above, which were achieved by two Indian laboratories from a piece of wood recovered from a shallow layer of the site. One laboratory dated the piece of wood to 6500 B.C., and another to 7500 B.C. NIOT hopes to obtain datable material from deeper layers of the site on a future expedition, and this may well push back the age of the submerged city even further.

### Advanced Architecture

These dates, combined with the astonishing size and complexity of the city, effectively disprove the orthodox view of the origins of civilization, which holds that civilization first began with the Sumerians around 3100 B.C. The submerged city is at least 150 times larger than the largest Near Eastern settlements of 7500 B.C., such as the village of Catalhoyuk in Anatolia.

In the 1920s, Sir John Marshall, who headed a team of explorers during the British rule in India, called the findings

in Harappa and Mohenjo Daro the "Indus Civilization" because it flourished in the valley of the Indus River. Marshall's announcement then, pushed India's known history back by 2,000 years. At the time of India's independence in 1947, barely a dozen Indus sites had been explored.

With the prime sites, Mohenjo Daro and Harappa, becoming part of Pakistan, however, a feverish hunt began in India to locate and excavate Indus sites—a race that its neighbor soon joined. In doing so, they began uncovering a civilization so vast in its extent, that at its peak it is estimated to have encompassed a staggering 1.5 million square miles—an area larger than Western Europe. In size, it dwarfed contemporary civilizations in the Nile Valley in Egypt and in the Tigris and Euphrates Valleys in Sumer (modern Iraq). The so-called Indus Valley civilization's geographical boundaries are now believed to extend up to the Iranian border in the west; Turkmenistan and Kashmir in the north; New Delhi in the east; and the Godavari River Valley in the south.

A recent count showed that as many as 1,399 "Indus cities" have been found (see **Figure 1**), of which 917 are in India, 481 in Pakistan, and one in Afghanistan. While Mohenjo Daro and Harappa are regarded as the principal cities, there were at least several others, such as Rakhigarhi in the Indian state of Haryana and Ganweriwala in Pakistan's Punjab province, that match them both in size and importance. It is also apparent that the civilization did not just center on the Indus River Valley. When the sites were plotted on a map of the Indian Subcontinent, archaeologists noticed a curious clustering of sites along the Ghaggar River, which flows through the Indian states of Haryana and Rajasthan, and runs almost parallel to the Indus River. After entering Pakistan, where it is called Hakra, the river finally empties itself into the sea at the Rann of Kutch. Some 175 sites were found along the alluvial plains of the Ghaggar, as compared to 86 found in the Indus region.

### The Vedic Reference

What puzzled the archaeologists was that the Ghaggar-Hakra River and most of its tributaries are dry and their courses have silted up. So why did so many cities come up on such a desiccated water sheet, especially at a time when the rivers were the lifelines of civilizations? Unless, of course, at one time a mighty river flowed perennially along that course. In their search for answers, Indus experts sought assistance from the *Rig Veda*, which is believed to have been composed when the Indus River Valley civilization was on the decline. Many of its hymns mention a sacred river called Saraswati, describing it as the foremost of rivers, big as the ocean, rising in the mountains and flowing between the rivers Yamuna and Sutlej before entering the sea. But in later Vedic hymns, it is no longer described as mighty, which indicates that the Saraswati was already drying up.

In the 1980s, Indian satellite images of the region showed that the ancient bed of the Ghaggar-Hakra River could be traced from the Siwalik range of mountains in the Himalayas

FIGURE 1

## Region of Ancient Indus Civilization



Part of the very large region inhabited by the ancient maritime Vedic civilization known as “Indus River” or “Harappan.” The cities were concentrated not only along the Indus River, but also the (now underground) Sarasvati River, found by radar in 1980. Rivers in the Rann Kutch region at the lower right may have once continued out into what is now Gulf of Cambay, at the bottom of map, where the most ancient remains have been found this year.

in the north, to the Rann of Kutch. Where it is not covered by sand, the bed of the river consists of a fertile loam and its width extends from 3-10 kilometers on different parts of its course, making it a very wide river. Putting together the evidence, V.N. Misra, director of the Department of Archaeology at Deccan College, in Pune, recently came to the conclusion that the Ghaggar-Hakra River was, in fact, the Vedic Saraswati, and existed when the Indus Valley civilization flourished.

### History and Writing Pushed Back

How did the mini-acropolis discovered in January, once slide into the Gulf of Cambay to be forgotten in history? Theories abound. One of the more mainstream theories avers that a couple of major rivers may have been flowing approximately in the westerly direction coinciding with the course of the present day Tapti and Narmada rivers. Due to geological and tectonic events, the entire Cambay area might have sunk,

taking down with it the westernmost section of the then-existing river and the habitation settled along its banks.

On the other hand, the NIOT team, supported by Department of Ocean Development (DOD) Secretary Harsh Gupta, a noted seismologist, puts forward the earthquake theory to explain the disappearance of this city by the river. In the wake of the catastrophic earthquake in the state of Gujarat on Jan. 26, 2000, few will argue with the claim that western India has tectonically been an active terrain from the pre-Cambrian age to the present day.

What is even more interesting is that the beginning of history will itself have to be pushed back at least 4,000 years, because the Cambay cities have already yielded evidence of writing. A piece of stone has been recovered with an unknown script engraved on it in a circular pattern. Some of the characters resemble those that appeared in the Harappan script, which appeared 4,000 years later, and which remains undeciphered.

The ancient Vedic texts, which are at the heart of Hindu philosophy and religion, already tell us of an early civilization of great sophistication that was submerged beneath the sea at the end of the last Ice Age.

Plato, writing in *Critias* and *Timaeus* around 300 B.C., described the submergence of a mythical city, which was already dated back some 9,000 years by raconteurs in his day. Plato’s words could well be used to describe the “mysterious acropolis” discovered in the depths of the Gulf of Cambay in January. Replace “Atlantis” by “Cambay” and we go back to an urban civilization dating no later than 4900 B.C., and as old as 7500 B.C.

*EIR* Founding Editor Lyndon LaRouche has pointed to the submerged continental shelves as the places where the remains of ancient, maritime civilizations would be found, and has, since 1982, insisted that the cities of coastal maritime civilizations must predate the so-called “riparian” river valley civilizations long claimed by archaeology to be the oldest. “For example, the case of Sumer,” LaRouche wrote in November 2001, “as emphasized by the account of the historian Herodotus . . . we are informed that the Phoenicians, ancient Sheba, ancient Abyssinia, and Sumer, were among the colonies founded by a maritime culture which ostensibly dominated the relevant regions of the Indian Ocean. . . . The sundry archaeological fragments show a relatively powerful such maritime culture of broadly Dravidian language-pedigree during that interval, a language which interacted with the Aryans’ Vedic. To situate these developments, including the Aryan descent upon South Asia, we must take into account the most catastrophic phases of the post-17th millennium (B.C.) glacial melt, and the succession of climate changes, especially from about 10,000 B.C. onward.”

Other such remains of ancient cities or megalithic structures have been found on the continental shelves off China, Japan, southeastern India, and Cuba in the past two years. They have not yet yielded datings, as has the very ancient city under the Gulf of Cambay.