

# Harappan Architecture: A Study

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**Abstract:** *Harappan civilization called a urban civilization due to findings of huge architectures during the last session of excavation at Harappan sites. This civilization archaeologist has been looking of objects that would help to identify the rules and political leaders of these cities. In this paper, an analytical study of the archaeological data pertaining to the “citadels” at various sites along with the other “extra ordinary” monumental and architectural features at these Harappan sites which lie outside the citadel area will be discussed. A brief study of archaeological evidences pertaining to our issue is as under the study.*

**Keywords;** Archaeological Survey of India, Harappa, Indian Archaeological Review.

Ever since the discovery of the Indus valley civilization archaeologists have been looking of objects that would help to identify the rules and political leaders of these cities. What they have found is quite unexpected, because it does not follow the general pattern seen in other early urban societies. The Indus ruler appears to have governed their cities through the control of trade and religion, rather than with military might. No monuments were erected to glorify their power. And as we know, there is the absence of decipherable literary evidences pertaining to this period.

During the excavation of these sites, the archaeologists study the contours of the sites and the comparatively higher mound is more often than not christened as the citadel and it was presumed to be the seat of the governing authority, and thus is generally associated with royal architecture that was to be found during the Proto-historic period.

At Harappa, excavation at the citadel mound, revealed the evidences of a mud brick platform. However, it is not certain, if there was a single platform all through the citadel, or there were separate ones, like

Kalibangan.<sup>1</sup> Nor have any worthwhile excavations been carried out to reveal the character of buildings in and around this plat inside, as has been done both at Mohenjodaro and Kalibangan.

At Mohenjodarao, evidences of a building,<sup>2</sup> which is situated in the southern part of the citadel, measuring 27\*27 m, were found. It was characterized by the presence of twenty piers inside it. There lay in five east west rows of four each, thus producing a crisscross pattern of aisles. The main entrance was from the north. With the aforesaid structural set up it seems most likely that the complex was used for holding assemblies-weather religious or secular or mixed, it cannot be said with certainty.

To the east of the great bath, at the citadel mound, are the ruins of a structural complex, which despite its obscure architectural history, seems to be important. The main entrances were from the east and one of them lead to a hall, which opened, into a courtyard, which was cluttered with poorly built walls. There were a series of self-contained and isolated rooms across the entrance hall, perhaps with an upper story. The southern part of the building was divided into three blocks by parallel passages opening out westwards from a corridor on the east.

According to Mackay, this was “a building of unusual character” and hence of “exceptional importance”. He emphasizes the thick outer wall and its size (230.7 ft/70.31m by 78.5 ft / 23.92 m) and composition as a single architectural unit. The proximity of this building to a presumed sacred shrine beneath the sputa and its well, recalling that of the great wall made him believe that this was “once the residence of a very high official, possible the High priest. He names it the “collegiate building” (and even suggests that the entrance to the southern blocks where “student entrances.”).

The mature Harappan settlement of Kalibangan,<sup>3</sup> was constructed in the metropolitan style. There were two clear-cut parts to it: a “citadel” to the west and a “lower town” to the east. In order to give the former some height, it was located on the ruins, of the pre-harappan settlement; while the later was situated on an unbroken ground close to it the intermediary gap being only about 40 m.

The citadel complex is further divisible into two equal parts, southern and northern, both being duly fortified, with a bipartite wall in between. Each part formed a rhomb on plan, being duly fortified, with a bipartite wall in between. Each part formed a rhomb on plan, with the side measuring 120 m. Thus, the citadel as a whole was in the form of a parallelogram, 240 \* 120 m in size, and the longer – shorter axis proportion being 2 : 1.

The northern half of the citadel had residential houses. This portion had limited occupancy; most likely by priests or priest administrators' who looked after the affairs of the southern rhomb, presumably, they also managed the general administration of the settlement as a whole. The house blocks were separated from the bipartite wall by a fairly wide passage, which was also paved with bricks on edge. Towards the east, this passage opened into a gateway through which, communication was maintained with the lower town. The Erickson edge paving, commencing from this gateway ran past the eastern of the two central salient and perhaps went up to the steeped entrance into the southern rhomb and one is tempted to regard it as a ceremonial passage way on which probably marched the procession of worshippers led by priests. Emerging from the easterly salient was another street, which ran in a northwesterly direction, leading to the gateway at the end. This was the riverside entrance and must have been used for bringing in produce from the satellite villages located up and down the stream.

The citadel at Dholavira,<sup>4</sup> unlike its counterparts at Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Kalibangan, was laid out in the south of the city area<sup>5</sup>. Like Kalibangan and Surkotada, it had two conjoined subdivisions, tentatively christened as castle and bailey; located on the east and west respectively, both being fortified structures.<sup>6</sup>

The former is the most zealously guardedly impregnable defenses and aesthetically furnished with impressive gates, towers and silent's, while the latter is lower in height and enclosed by competitively less thick wall. The south of the castle, across the adjoining reservoir, there was raised another built up area running along the city wall. It should, as it appears, have been an annex meant housing the retainers and menials attending on the privileged occupants of the castle warehouse.

**Analysis:** If we see the locations of the structures that make up the royal architecture or the site of the first urbanization then we find that at Mohanjodaro, 'Assembly hall' and 'residence of high priest' is situated on

western citadel mound. However at Rakhigarhi, Kalibangan and Harappa not a single building was found which could be associated with royal architectures, nonetheless, at Kalibangan and Rakhigarhi, some residential blocks had been unearthed but none with any significant architectures features by which one can associated them with royal architecture.

### References:

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