

TRADE

Location of Cities

The largest cities and towns are situated along major river systems and coastal areas where people could control the movement of goods and raw materials. Built on enormous mud-built platforms high above the floodwaters, the cities had a vantage point from which to view the surrounding plains. Watch towers built along the city walls could provide lookouts to signal the approach of riverboats and caravans.

Period of Trade – and weather considerations

Overland trade would have been undertaken after the monsoon rains were over.

Sea-borne trade would have been determined entirely by the monsoon winds. The northeast monsoon winds would have aided the passage of boats towards the Red Sea from May to June while the south-easterly winds in August would have provided wind power for the return journey. After August the ships would have been engaged in coastal traffic. Many of the ships would probably have hopped along the Makran coast and then sailed to the Persian Gulf to the port cities of Mesopotamia.

Weights and Measures

Cubic weights are made from banded chert or other patterned stone

- Doubling from 1 : 2 : 4 : 8 : 16 : 32 : 64 then going to 160 then in decimal multiples of 16 when the next largest weights have a ratio of 160, 200 and 320. The next set consists of 1600, 3200, 6400, 8000 and 12,800.
- The largest weight found at Mohenjodaro is 10,865 grammes
- Measures consisted of a cubit (52 centimetres) and the long foot (33.5 centimetres)

Seals

Information on seals consists of

- Animal before an object, i.e. a manger or standard
- Ideograms consist of letters and numerals

Trade

Local trade was primarily focussed on supplying the cities with food and the raw materials for producing tools, status objects and trade goods.

Sea trade was probably heaviest with Oman since numerous Indus artefacts have been found in Oman.

Trade was conducted through a barter system and a reciprocal exchange of goods for

services and probably through the exchange of standardised system of cubical stone weights. The smaller weights could have been used for taxation.

Imports

Raw Materials

- Gold: Afghanistan and Karnataka
- Silver: Afghanistan and Iran
- Copper: Oman, Baluchistan and Rajasthan
- Lead: East or south India
- Lapis lazuli: Baluchistan and Afghanistan
- Fuchsite: Northern Karnataka
- Amethyst: Maharashtra
- Agate: Baluchistan and Gujarat
- Chalcedony: Baluchistan and Gujarat
- Carnelian: Baluchistan and Gujarat
- Jade: Central Asia
- Turquoise: Baluchistan and Iran
- Shell: Gujarat, Karachi and Oman
- Ivory: Gujarat and Punjab
- Mother of Pearl: Oman
- Wool: Mesopotamia
- Incense: Mesopotamia

Manufactured Goods

- Carved chlorite containers: Baluchistan and Iran
- Green schist containers: Baluchistan and Iran
- Fuchsite containers: Baluchistan and Afghanistan

Exports

Raw Materials

- Gold: Mesopotamia
- Silver: Mesopotamia
- Bronze: Mesopotamia
- Ebony
- Ivory: Oman
- Indigo: Oman

- Wood: Oman
- Livestock: Oman
- Grain: Oman
- Fresh fruit: Oman

Manufactured Goods

- Carnelian beads: Mesopotamia
- Shell inlays: Mesopotamia
- Shell bangles: Mesopotamia
- Lapis lazuli: Mesopotamia
- Bone inlays
- Clarified Butter: Oman
- Pickled vegetables: Oman
- Pickled fruits: Oman
- Honey: Oman
- Chert weights: Oman
- Wine: Oman

Manufactured Objects

- Gold
 - beads
 - pendants
 - amulets
 - brooches
 - needles
 - ornaments
- Silver
 - large utensils
 - buckles
- Ivory
 - combs
 - carved cylinders (for seals, small sticks and pins)
- Shell
 - beads
 - bracelets
 - decorative inlays
- Steatite beads
 - bracelets
 - buttons
 - vessels

faience
amulets
sealings

- Faience Bangles
 - rings
 - miniature animals
 - pots
- Terracotta
 - animals
 - toy carts
 - whistles
 - rattles
 - birds and animals
 - gamesmen
 - discs
 - beads
- Agate beads
- Carnelian beads
- Chalcedony weights

Manufacturing Areas

Kalibangan

- steatite beads

Saraikhola

- lapis lazuli beads

Chanhudaro

- shell and bone artefacts

Dholavira

- carnelian bead processing

Lothal

Mehergarh

- painted pottery

- steatite ornaments
- faience ornaments
- metal tools
- agate and carnelian beads
- inlaid objects

Mode of Transport

- Flat-bottomed boats and rafts on rivers were used for trading. These boats would have carried most of the trade goods up and down the Indus Valley. Human porters pulling the boats from the riverbank probably aided the trip upriver. Long oars and sails made from mat or heavy cotton cloth would also have been used.
- Two wheel bullock carts were used for heavy transport across the plains. These carts were made in five different styles, which were probably used by different sections of the population. They would have been made of wood with leather and sinew bindings for the harnesses.
- Pack animals included oxen, sheep and goats
- Sea-going vessels would have had sails and a keel.

Harappan Ports

- Lothal
- Sutkagen-dor
- Sotka-koh
- Balakot