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Q3(a)

Critically describe evidences from Rakhi Garhi and its linkages to Harappan civilization.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · Anthropology GS 2 · 20 marks · Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization

1.1 Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization-Prehistoric (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Neolithic-Chalcolithic), Protohistoric (Indus Civilization). Pre-Harappan, Harappan and post-Harappan cultures. Contributions of the tribal cultures to Indian civilization.

Core demand of the question

- **Describe Rakhigarhi as a Harappan site:** location, size, sequence and finds
- Link architecture, craft, burial and biology to the wider Harappan world
- **Be critical:** what the site shows and what DNA or media claims over-state
- Spell the site as Rakhigarhi while honouring the paper's Rakhi Garhi

Revision summary

Rakhigarhi in Hisar is among the largest Harappan sites, with Early and Mature levels.

Streets, drains, seals, weights, beads and burials match the Harappan urban package.

It anchors the eastern Ghaggar province in the same civilisation as Harappa and Mohenjo-daro.

aDNA from the cemetery is scientifically notable but too thin to write a people or a language.

Do not treat the site as a separate civilisation or as a palace-state with a named king.

Introduction

Rakhigarhi (Rakhi Garhi) in Hisar district, Haryana, is among the largest Harappan cities on the now-seasonal **Ghaggar-Hakra** (often identified with Sarasvati in debate). Excavations by **Amarendra Nath** (ASI) and later **Vasant Shinde** (Deccan College) show a long sequence from Early to Mature Harappan. The site links the eastern Harappan province to the Indus system without making it a separate civilisation.

Body**Site and sequence**

The mounds cover several hundred hectares (estimates vary with how outskirts are counted). Settlement begins in the **Early Harappan** (regional Hakra / Sothi-Siswal related levels) and thickens in the **Mature Harappan** (c. 2600-1900 BCE). Planning includes streets, burnt-brick drains, platforms and craft quarters, comparable to Harappa and Mohenjo-daro in **urban grammar**, though not in every monumental form. A possible reservoir and extensive mud-brick architecture sit in an alluvial setting, not on a perennial Indus main stem. That geography matters: the eastern Harappan belt used Ghaggar hydrology and overland routes to Gujarat and the Ganga-Yamuna doab edge.

Material linkages

Finds include typical Mature Harappan **pottery, steatite seals and sealings, weights, faience and agate beads**, copper objects, terracotta figurines, and evidence of **craft specialisation** (bead-making, possibly pyrotechnical crafts). Burials in a cemetery area show body orientation and grave goods in the **Harappan range**. These are the same **civilisational package** as at Kalibangan, Banawali, Farmana and, westward, Harappa: standardised measurement, script signs, and craft-trade.

Linkages are therefore **stylistic, economic and urban**, not a claim that Rakhigarhi ruled the Indus. It is a **primate eastern city** in a network that also included **Dholavira, Lothal, Rakhigarhi, Mohenjo-daro** and **Harappa**. Agricultural hinterland (barley, wheat, later evidence discussed for millets and animal husbandry) ties it to the Harappan agro-pastoral base.

Biological and critical evidence

Human remains from Rakhigarhi have been used in **aDNA** studies associated with Shinde and collaborators. Results have been publicly argued as showing **Iranian-farmer-related ancestry without a Steppe component in a Mature Harappan individual**, a finding used in debates on Indo-Aryan language spread. Anthropology must separate **one cemetery's genetics** from a full population history. Sample size is small. Contamination and labelling debates exist. Genetic affinity is not a script, a language, or a caste origin story.

Skeletal biology also informs health, stature and stress - the ordinary bioarchaeology of an urban Harappan, comparable to Harappa cemetery analyses. Do not inflate Rakhigarhi into "the capital of all Harappans" or into a nationalist counter to Mehrgarh and the Indus west. **Mehrgarh** remains crucial for food production; Rakhigarhi remains crucial for the **scale of the eastern Mature Harappan**.

Critical description

Evidence of urbanism is strong; evidence of a palace-state is weak, as for Harappan sites generally. Flood, river shift and the Late Harappan transformation affect the Ghaggar belt as they affect Cholistan. Post-urban occupation should not be erased to keep a pure "Sarasvati" story. The correct linkage is: **Rakhigarhi is Harappan in craft, plan, script-bearing objects and burial custom, and it shows that the civilisation's centre of gravity included the Haryana-Ghaggar plains, not only Sindh and Punjab west.**

Flow diagram

Early Harappan -> Mature Rakhigarhi
 Mature Rakhigarhi -> Plan drains craft
 Mature Rakhigarhi -> Network to Indus and Gujarat
 aDNA small sample -> Caution on ethnicity

Conclusion

Rakhigarhi is a major Early-to-Mature Harappan city of the Ghaggar belt, linked to the wider civilisation by bricks, drains, seals, weights, craft and burials. Ancient DNA is a limited, important clue, not a complete ethnic history. The site expands the map of Harappan urbanism eastward; it does not replace Mohenjo-daro or invent a separate culture.

Facts & figures

Location

Rakhigarhi, Hisar district, Haryana, on the Ghaggar-Hakra plain.

Excavators

ASI under Amarendra Nath; later Deccan College under Vasant Shinde, among others.

Harappan package

Standardised bricks, drainage, seals, cubical weights and craft specialisation shared across the Indus-Ghaggar urban world.

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