

RIG VEDIC SETTLEMENT: HISTORY

NEWS: Rajasthan dig reveals 3500 year settlement

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

The ASI has uncovered a 3,500-year-old settlement and ancient palaeochannel in Rajasthan's Bahaj village, potentially linked to the Rig Veda's Saraswati River, offering new insights into India's early civilization, metallurgy, and script development.

Discovery and Context

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has discovered a 3,500-year-old archaeological site in Bahaj village, Deeg district, Rajasthan.
- Along with the site, ASI unearthed an ancient palaeochannel buried 23 meters underground, providing new evidence of early water systems in the region.
- This discovery has led historians and archaeologists to associate the site with the Saraswati River described in the Rig Veda, offering potential proof of the river's historical course and its role in early Indian civilization.

Key Findings

Rig Veda-Era Settlement:

- The settlement unearthed in Bahaj is believed to date back to the period described in the Rig Veda, one of the world's oldest known texts.
- This strengthens the argument that the Saraswati basin supported early organized human communities mentioned in ancient Vedic literature.

Palaeochannel Discovery:

- The palaeochannel found beneath Bahaj is thought to be part of an ancient river system that sustained early human settlements.
- This is the first palaeochannel of its kind discovered in India, marking a significant breakthrough in studying India's ancient river-based civilizations.
- It provides crucial geological and archaeological evidence of ancient water systems that shaped early settlements and agriculture.

Settlement Timeline:

- Evidence suggests that the site was inhabited between 3500 to 1000 BC, overlapping with key periods of India's early history.
- Excavations reveal connections to later dynasties such as the Kushan, Magadha, and Sunga, suggesting continuous habitation and cultural evolution.
- Discovery of microlithic tools indicates the region's pre-Holocene occupation by hunter-gatherer communities, suggesting an even older human presence.

Residential and Metallurgical Evidence:

- Excavations uncovered remains of houses built with earthen posts and trenches, suggesting planned residential structures.
- Archaeologists found furnaces, along with iron and copper artefacts, indicating advanced knowledge of metallurgy.
- The variety of tools and metallurgical remains points to organized production and technological innovation by early inhabitants.

Spiritual and Cultural Relics:

- The site yielded 15 yajna kundas (sacrificial pits) and votive tanks, highlighting the region's ritual and spiritual practices centered around Shakti worship.
- Terracotta figures of Shiva and Parvati dating to at least 1000 BC show the development of early Hindu religious imagery and ritual practices.

Brahmi Script and Early Coinage:

- Four unbaked sealings were discovered at the site, with two featuring inscriptions in Brahmi script—among the earliest known examples of this ancient writing system in India.
- Copper coins with inscriptions were also found, challenging existing theories about the timeline and evolution of Indian coinage and monetary systems.

Craft Heritage:

- Archaeologists uncovered bone tools, semi-precious stone beads, and shell bangles, reflecting the skilled craftsmanship of Bahaj's ancient inhabitants.
- The range and sophistication of artefacts highlight the community's rich craft traditions and their engagement in regional trade and cultural exchange.

Significance of the Findings:

- The excavation in Bahaj is expected to reshape the understanding of India's ancient history, particularly around the Saraswati river's historical presence and impact on early civilization.
- The discovery of advanced metallurgy, organized settlement patterns, early script usage, and evidence of spiritual practices offers valuable insights into the evolution of urbanism, religion, and technology in ancient India.
- This finding may revise existing historical timelines and theories related to the development of early Indian civilization, the spread of Brahmi script, and the emergence of early economic systems.

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/rajasthan-dig-reveals-3500-year-old-settlement-asi-traces-ancient-riverbed-findings-may-link-it-to-rig-veda-era-saraswati-river/articleshow/122032942.cms>