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## Indian civilisation '9,000 years old'



By Rajyasri Rao in Delhi

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Marine scientists in India say an archaeological site off India's western coast may be up to 9,000 years old.

The revelation comes about 8 months after acoustic images from the sea-bed suggested the presence of built-up structures resembling the ancient Harappan civilisation, which dates back around 4,000 years.

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The Harappan civilisation is the oldest in the subcontinent.

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Although Palaeolithic sites dating back around 20,000 years have been found on the coast of India's western state of Gujarat before, this is the first time there are indications of man-made structures as old as 9,500 years found deep beneath the sea surface.

### Search impeded

Known as the Gulf of Cambay, the area has been subject to a great deal of archaeological interest due to its proximity to another ancient submerged site - Dwaraka - in the nearby Gulf of Kutch.

But investigations in



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The BBC's Richard Black  
"Researchers have found a large number of artefacts"

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the Cambay region have been made more difficult by strong tidal currents running at around two to three metres per second.

They impede any sustained underwater studies.

Marine scientists led by the Madras-based National Institute of Ocean Technology said they got around this problem by taking acoustic images off the sea-bed and using dredging equipment to extract artefacts.

A second round of investigations was conducted about three months ago.

### 'Glorious past'

The Indian Minister for Ocean Technology, Murli Manohar Joshi, told journalists the images indicated not only symmetrical man-made structures but also a paleo-river, running for around nine kilometres, on whose banks all the artefacts were discovered.

Carbon dating carried out on one of these artefacts - a block of wood bearing the signs of deep fissures - suggested it had been around since about 7,595 BC.

Mr Joshi said his ministry planned to set up a multi-disciplinary group to look into what this discovery really meant and what relation it might have to other ancient sites in the area.

Critics say the minister, who has been in the eye of a storm recently for attempts to Hinduise school history textbooks, may well be presenting these archaeological discoveries as proof of India's glorious and ancient past.

But others say only further scientific studies can tell whether such a claim can be made at all.



Harappan remains have been found in India and Pakistan

stories are at the foot of the page.



Experts say submerged pottery may offer a clue

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