

Comparative Visual Analysis of Symbolic and Illegible Indus Valley Script with Other Languages

Mrs. Maria Ansari¹, Mr. Farjad Faiz², Ms. Amna Ansari³

1,2, University College of Art and Design, The Islamia University Bahawalpur, Pakistan
3.College of Art and Design, Punjab University Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract: An analysis and interpretation of the so-called Harappan script, its decipherment and relation with other scriptures belongs to different cultures, the signs of the script have the most peculiar and elaborate iconographies of Indus Civilization. It is represented on many stamp seals of fired steatite and corresponding clay sealing, terracotta tablets in bas-relief, copper tablets and tokens. The Harappan seal was composed of body parts derived from different animals, as well as humans and other fantastic beings of the Indus imagination. A detailed documentation and description of all the objects bearing chimaeras makes it possible to recognize not only a basic set of regular combinations and some aspects of their possible similarities, but also visual associations among selected signs from the different civilizations that could be perceived and semantically interpreted at different levels as this paper belongs to the visual analysis of the symbolic comparison of Indus Valley illegible script with other languages for its value. We believe that the sophisticated structure of these images fully deserves to be meaningful and have identity. Mostly resembles with the language of Dravidians.

Keywords: visual analysis, symbolic comparison, Indus Valley illegible script.

I. Introduction



(Fig 1)

Indus civilization, also called Indus valley civilization or Harappan civilization, the earliest known urban culture of the Indian subcontinent. The documentation of that time is on the seals. The seals and tablets have introduced examples of the pictographic script which still constitutes one of the major mysteries of the Indus Valley civilization. The script cannot be read, at present we can only predict certain rather arid principles about it (fig 2). There are many works on the decipherment of the script and on their solutions. This paper also compares its symbols with different signs and alphabets of different languages and carve out the most resembled language as Dravidian language, more experimental Sumerian script employs more than twice the numbers, is consistent with that on Egyptian analogy the hieroglyphic state; it has not degenerated nor been worn down by use to conventional summaries like Egyptian hieratic, the Babylonian cuneiform, or the Chinese writing. The inscription begins from right, but where there is a second line this begins from the left.



(Fig 2. seals)

Indus civilization was first identified in 1921 at Harappa in the Punjab region and then in 1922 at Mohenjo-daro (Mohenjodaro), near the Indus River in the Sindh (Sind) region, now both in Pakistan. Subsequently, vestiges of the civilization were found as far apart as Sutkagen Dor, near the shore of the Arabian Sea 300 miles (480 km) west of Karachi, also in Pakistan, and Rupnagar, in India, at the foot of the Shimla Hills 1,000 miles (1,600 km) to the northeast. Later exploration established its existence southward down the west coast of India as far as the Gulf of Khambhat (Cambay), 500 miles (800 km) southeast of Karachi, and as far east as the Yamuna (Jumna) River basin, 30 miles (50 km) north of Delhi.

The Indus civilization is known to have comprised two large cities, Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, and more than 100 towns and villages, often of relatively small size. The two cities were each perhaps originally about one mile square in overall dimensions, and their outstanding magnitude suggests political centralization, either in two large states or in a single great empire with alternative capitals, a practice having analogies in Indian history (fig 1). Or it may be that Harappa succeeded Mohenjo-daro, which is known to have been devastated more than once by exceptional floods. The southern region of the civilization, on the Kathiawar Peninsula and beyond, appears to be of later origin than the major Indus sites. The civilization was literate, and its script, with some 250 to 500 characters, has been partly and tentatively deciphered; the language has been indefinitely identified as Dravidian. The nuclear dates of the civilization appear to be about 2500–1700 BCE.

Perhaps the best-known artifacts of the Indus civilization are a number of small seals, generally made of steatite, which are distinctive in kind and unique in quality, depicting a wide variety of animals, both real—such as elephants, tigers, rhinoceros, and antelopes—and fantastic, often composite creatures. Sometimes human forms are included. A few examples of Indus stone sculpture have also been found, usually small and representing humans or gods. There are great numbers of small terra-cotta figures of animals and humans. (fig 3)



(Fig 3. seals)

How and when the civilization came to an end remains uncertain. In fact, no uniform ending need be postulated for a culture so widely distributed. But the end of Mohenjo-daro is known and was dramatic and sudden.

(fig 4. Indus Valley texts)"Indus Valley texts are cryptic to extremes, and the script shows few signs of evolutionary change," Farmer and Witzel wrote in October 2000. "Most [Indus] inscriptions are no more than four or five characters long; many contain only two or three characters. Moreover, character shapes in mature Harappa appear to be strangely 'frozen', unlike anything seen in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia or China." (Muthy)



(Fig 4. Indus Valley texts)

“It claims computer analysis revealed comparative "entropic evidence" that Indus signs have a linguistic order similar to some of the world's oldest languages, such as Sumerian from Mesopotamia, classical Tamil and Sanskrit from the Indian sub-continent”.(Muthy)

In 2004, perhaps out of befuddlement and frustration, a group of scholars declared that the script marked only rudimentary pictograms and that the Indus Valley people were functionally illiterate.(Tharoor)

Analysis and comparison for decipherment of Indus Valley writing:

In 1983 announced decipherment of Indus Valley writing.Many researchers have attempted to decipher the Harappan writing. These researchers have attempted to decipher Harappan writing using several methods. Kak and several other researchers attempt to link the Harappans to people of Mahargarh, but by archaeological data that link separated by 4000 years as Mahargarh Civilization existed around 6500 BC, and the Indus Valley civilization existed between 2600-1900 BC.

The Iconography and figures of these two cultures are totally different as the Mehargarh figures have eyes which are holes; the Indus Valley figures have broad lips and compound.

These researchers fail to decipher the Indus Valley writing because they refused to respect the view of many Dravidian Scholars that they originated in Africa. This was supported by archaeological and linguistic evidence.

The decipherment on three facts:

1. The fact that in west Indus, Brahue, a Dravidian language is spoken in Balochistan and Afghanistan.
2. The Rig Veda is written in a form of Dravidian called Sumero Tamil.
3. The presence of Dravidian loan word in Sanskrit indicated that Dravidian speakers probably occupied that Northern India and Pakistan before the Aryans invasion of the area after 1000 BC with their grey ware.

Over 4000 years ago a civilization existed in Indus Valley. This revering civilization is referred to by archaeology as the Harappa or Indus Valley civilization. The founder of this civilization was Proto-Dravidians speaking people from middle Africa. Now mainly situated in South India, these people earlier lived in central Asia, and even China.

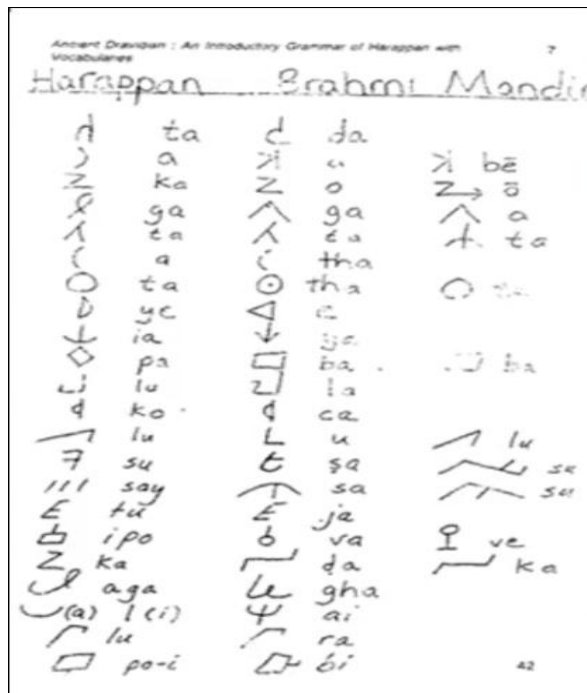
Harappans have left us thousand of written documents. These are called seals by archaeologists and the Harappan seals are written in Dravidian Language analogous to Tamil. Over 4000 Harappan seals have been found at 60 different sites. The script in corporate 419 signs but there are around 60-70 basic syllabic signs. The remaining 339 signs are compound or ligature signs formed by combination of two or more basic signs. There are also 10 ideographic signs. Harappan writing appears on both steatite seals and copper plates/ tablets ninety percent of the seals are square, the remaining ten percent are rectangular. They range in size from half an-inch to around two and-half inches. The key to deciphering the Harappan script was the recognition that the proto Dravidians who settled the Proto- Sahara were they used the so-called Libyco-Berber writing.(fig 5)

COMPARISON POTTERY INSCRIPTIONS

Megalithic Pottery	Indus Script	Egyptian Pottery Signs 1st Dynasty	Manding Script	Amotian
^	^	v	^	^
x	x		x x	x
l	y	y y	l l	l
h	y	m	m	
h	h	h	h	h
M	w		M	
X	X	q	X q	X
+	+		+	
#	o	o	o	o
x	E	E	E X	E X
#	D	E	D E	D E
f	S		Z f	Z
x	o		x o	
U	U	U	U	U
T	U		U	
D	o	o	o	
T	T	T	T	
I	I	I	I	I
A	E		A	
A	o	o	A o	o

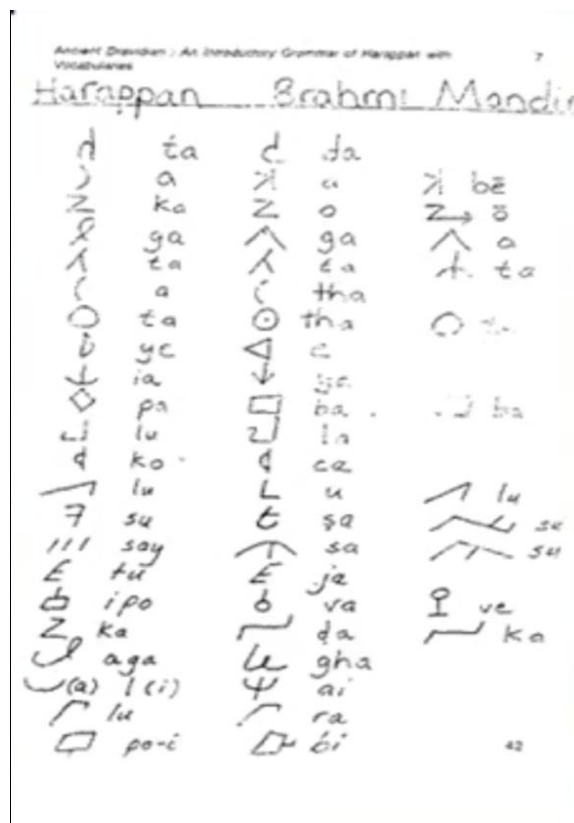
(fig 5. Comparison of pottery inscription)

The discovery of cognition between Vai and Harappan sign on the one hand and the corresponding relationship of sign corresponding relationship of sign sequences in the speedy reading and decipherment of Harappan signs. the Harappan script and Mande script show the same signs.



(fig 9 harappan, Brahmi and Mandar script)

A comparison of the Harappan signs, Brahmi and Vai writing shows that the signs have similar phonetic values. (fig 9, 10)



(fig 10 harappan, Brahmi and Mandar script)

Harppan seals illustrated as they believe want god forms on them

1. A good fate
2. Spiritual richness
3. Virtue
4. Humanity
5. Perseverance

The principal harappan gods are all depicted on the Harappan seals. As crescent shaped horns of the oxen or castrated bull on some Harappan seals may represents the mother goddess “Kali”. The lunar crescent shape of the oxen’s curved horns recalled the lunar crescent, which was the primordial sign for the mother goddess.



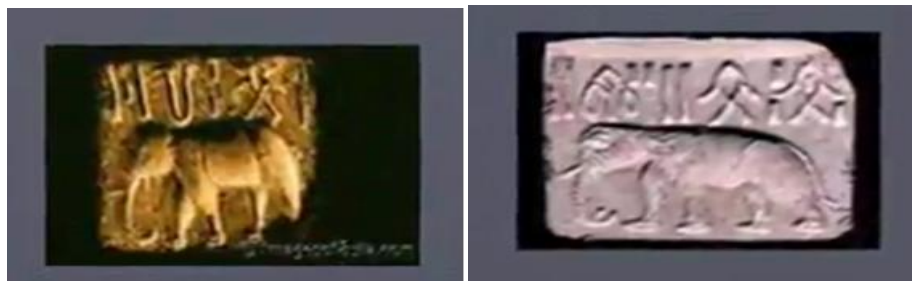
(fig 11. Bull)



(fig 12)

Siva was probably represented by the short horn Bull. (fig 11, 12)

The elephant on the Harappan seal may have represented Ganesa/Ganesha the elephant headed god of India. In the “Laws of Manu”, it is written that Ganesha is the god of the “Shudras” the aboriginal population of India. The Termilian name for the elephant god is ‘Pillaiyar, Palla and Veeram’. (fig 13)



(Fig 13. Elephant)

The god of the Harappans was the unicorn. The unicorn probably represented Mael this god was held in high esteem by the co herds and Sheppard. (fig 14)



(fig 14 unicorn)

Two sided seal also found in the Indus Valley, one side of seal, we have a forest scene and two bulls with short horns, on the other side, we have four signs. The forest scene can be probably interpreted as KaSiva, the transition of the signs on the opposite side of the seal is “Make virtue and glow admiration Fate and abundant virtue”.



(Fig 15 double sided seal)

II. Conclusion

It is clear that Harappan wrote request sentences on the seals. Even though the request on the seals fail to correspond to the mantras found on contemporary Tamil amulets, the seal inscriptions correspond to the messages recorded to Tiruvalluvar, and were meant to help the Harappan Believer grow into eternal bliss. It shows that the Proto-Dravidian remains the best working assumption for the language affiliation of the script. The “additions” thought by some to constitute meaningless allograph are in fact functional elements, perhaps phonetic indicators. Determinative were employed and ligatures occur systematically.

Bibliography

- [1]. Kenoyer, Jonathan Mark. *Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- [2]. Muthy, Raja. http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/KD30Df01.html. 30 April 2009. 15 02 2014.
- [3]. Possehl, Gregory L. *The Indus Civilization, A Contemporary Perspective*. New Delhi: Vistaar P, 2002.
- [4]. Hussain, Prof Dr. Musarat, et al. *QadeemInsaanaur Fun-e- Musawari*. Lahore: Poly P, 2004.
- [5]. Saddique, Mohammad Idrees. *waldi-e-SindhkiTehzeeb*. Lahore: Hafeez P, 2003.
- [6]. Tharoor, Ishaan. <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1919795,00.html#ixzz2tPPg8k7V>. 01 09 2009. 15 02 2014.
- [7]. Wheeler, Sir Mortimer. *The Indus Civilization*. Lahore: Sang-e- Meel, 1997.
- [8]. Winters, Dr. Clayde. *Decipherment of the Script of Indus Valley*. New York, 2009.